COMIC BOOK PROFILES™

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JOHN BYRNE

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY

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Tim Townsend
Jim Warden

John Byrne's Next Men *TM & © 1999 John Byrne All Rights Reserved.*

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Hello! I've got several news items for you, so here goes.

First, we're still compiling our Archie Goodwin Tribute Issue, so anyone who would like to contribute, please get in touch with us.

Second, starting with our next issue (#6 featuring Gene Colan) the cover price will increase to $2.99, and the page count will increase to 56 pages. We have had many requests to add more artwork, and this will enable us to do so.

Third, with issue #7 (featuring Mike Kaluta) we will accept ads. We have had numerous requests from people who wanted to advertise, so here's your chance! However, we will not be sacrificing content in favor of ads; on the contrary, we will increase the page count from 56 to 64 pages. For more information on advertising, please refer to page 37.

We've added a new column this issue, called "Mike's Meanderings" by Mike Pascale. We interviewed Mike for several of our first issues and he always provided us with humorous anecdotes so we decided to make his commentary a regular feature.

I'd like to thank everyone who contributed artwork from their personal collections for this issue: Tripp Braden, Eric Chun, Glen Gold, Jerry Ordway, Enrico Salvini, Andy Smith, Mark Tomlinson, and Tim Townsend.

Special thanks to: Paul Chadwick, Nick Cuti, Fred Hembeck, Tony Isabella, Dan Jurgens, Bill Nichols, Larry Niven, Jerry Ordway, Mike Pascale, John Romita, Sr., Andy Smith, Roger Stern, Tim Townsend, and Jim Warden.

Extra special thanks go to Terry Austin who not only contributed artwork and agreed to be interviewed, but who facilitated our efforts to contact John Byrne. And of course, extra special thanks to John Byrne for agreeing to be profiled and who patiently put up with requests for, "one more thing."

Please keep those letters coming and let us know what you think! We keep track of your suggestions for future issues, and do our best to interview those individuals with the most requests.

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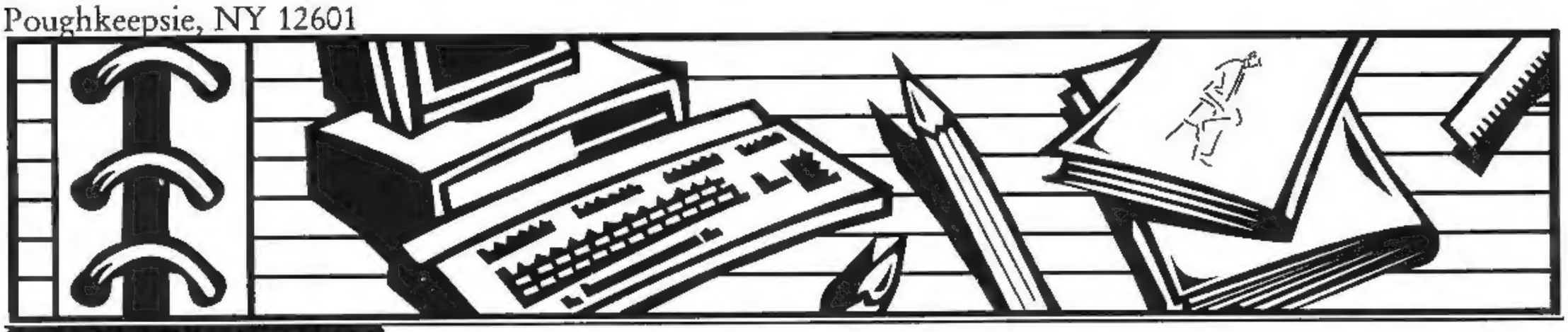

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scanned by Potifar, June 2006

Unpublished Justice League of America promotional piece. TM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

PROFILE

JOHN BYRNE

. . . . . .

You were interested in comics while you were still living in England?
Yes.

What were your main interests?
It was the Superman TV show that got me started. I first saw Superman on the TV show which was being run on the BBC. Then I saw a couple of the hardcover black and white annuals that reprinted American comics. I recognized that this was somehow Superman that I saw on the TV, and I got my mother to buy it for me. That got me started, and then sometime after that, I picked up an Australian reprint book that had a Batman story in it. I bought it because it had Superboy in it, and I knew that Superboy was connected to Superman, but it had a Batman story in it too. So Superman got me interested, but Batman got me hooked. I was hooked from the moment I read that first Batman story.

Do you remember who did the artwork in that story?
It was Dick Sprang, and as a matter of fact I have a re-creation of the splash page by Dick hanging on my wall.

Getting back to Superman for a moment, I heard a story that your interpretation of the emblem was . . .
Two fish swimming past each other. I was just barely able to read when I first started reading comics; I was just five. I'd been reading comics for about a year when the form came together and I wasn't looking at the negative space anymore. Remember, I was reading black and white reprints. I remember literally running into the kitchen and saying to my mother, "Look! It's an S!" The emblem had always been these strange white shapes that looked to me like a pair of fish swimming past each other.

One of your other influences was Eagle Comics?
Yes. *Eagle* was born the same year I was, actually. I didn't encounter *Eagle* until after we'd moved to Canada. An Aunt of mine — well, she wasn't really my Aunt but an old friend of my mother's — she started sending me *Eagle* in 1958. So I had this joint influence happening, where I had the American comics which were all sort of crude and rough-and-tumble in those days, and at the same time I had *Eagle* which was very elegant, upscale, reserved, and very British, of course.

What would one find in an issue of Eagle Comics?
The typical Eagle was a weekly book that had serial material in it. But the main one that I enjoyed was called *Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future*. It was done originally by an artist named Frank Hampson who was the creator.

TIMELINE

John Byrne

1950 John Byrne born on July, 6th in Walsall England.

1958 John and his parents settle in Canada. It is also during this year that he reads his first *Eagle Comics*.

1962 John reads his first Marvel comic book.

1975 His first professional work, Rog 2000, is published by Charlton in *E-Man* #6. *Marvel Premiere* #25 is published. This book features John's first superhero work (Iron Fist) for Marvel.

1976 John writes his first story for *Space 1999*.

1977 Starts pencilling the *X-Men* with issue #108.

1980 John's first work for DC, *Untold Legend of the Batman*, is published. Starts writing the *Fantastic Four*.

1981 John leaves the *Uncanny X-Men* with issue # 143.

1986 Revamps Superman in the *Man of Steel*.

1991 *John Byrne's Next Men* in *Dark Horse Presents* #54

1992 *John Byrne's Next Men* published by Dark Horse begins.

1998 *Spider-Man Chapter One* is published.

SO— A TOSS OF THE COIN DETERMINES WHETHER OR NOT I SHIFT THE SWITCH AND CAUSE THE TRAIN TO PASS ON THE PARALLEL TRACK...
TWO-FACE, NOT YOU CAN'T! THAT OTHER TRACK IS A SERVICE SIDING...
THERE'D BE NO CHANCE FOR THE DRIVER TO STOP BEFORE THE TRAIN PLOWED INTO THE DEAD END!
TRUE. BUT THAT IS NOT THE PROBLEM WE ARE CONSIDERING HERE, BATMAN.
IT IS YOUR LIFE WHICH HANGS BY THE TOSS OF THE COIN.
AND YOUR LIFE IS SPARED!
THE COIN HAS LANDED WITH THE UNBLEMISHED SIDE UP.
I WILL NOW SET THE TRACKS SO THAT THE TRAIN WILL NOT STRIKE YOU.
OF COURSE, THE SWITCH IS WITHIN EASY REACH OF YOUR BLACK BOOTED FOOT, BATMAN.
ONCE MY AIDES AND I HAVE DEPARTED, YOU WILL BE FREE TO RESUME THIS LOVER.
AND SO I BID YOU ADIEU, BATMAN.
YOU HAVE BEEN A MOST WORTHY ADVERSARY, BUT I CANNOT ALLOW YOUR FURTHER INTERFERENCE.
I HAVE ALREADY BEEN FRUSTRATED IN THE GOAL I SET MYSELF BEFORE ESCAPING.
THERE IS STILL A CHANCE, HOWEVER, TO ELIMINATE THE KNOWLEDGE OF MY FAILURE BY ELIMINATING THE OTHER COMPETITORS!

Batman 3-D TM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

Just as I was starting to read it, it was switching over from Frank Hampson to Frank Bellamy who went on to become one of the truly great influences in my career. My Aunt sent me *Eagle* for as long as she lived, which was about five years after that, and sort of warped my life in that particular direction. Probably just as well, too. Because if my influence had been *just* the American comics, I'm not quite sure what my style would be like. This gave me a little bit more of a rounded approach.

How were Eagle Comics different from American comics?
It's very fine art. They were all full-color paintings, what we think of as paintings but with a black line. It was exquisitely detailed. When he stopped doing *Dan Dare*, Bellamy started doing a strip called *Heros the Spartan*, and he would do these massive battle scenes with probably a hundred figures in a shot, and this would be only one panel out of twenty. Every figure would have a face, and every face would have an expression. This came out weekly, but he would do only every other story. He would have perhaps twenty or thirty episodes and then somebody else would do it. It was obvious that it was very time consuming. It was absolutely gorgeous stuff.

Is that still published today?
Eagle has gone through many incarnations. I think there is currently an incarnation of *Eagle* in England but I don't think it has a whole lot to do with the original book. The *Dan Dare* and the *Heros* material I have seen collected. I know that Fleet, the publisher of *Dan Dare*, was doing collections at one time. It's very beautiful work — I suppose you would call it quaint these days. It's funny because we're living in the period in which it was originally set, which is kind of scary. But it was outer space adventures all set within our solar system, and the headquarters of the World Space Fleet is in London, of course. It's really very cute and quaint when you look back on it. The art was just so extraordinary and gorgeous.

When you were eight you and your parents moved to Calgary?
To Edmonton, actually, but that's a minor detail. We ended up in Calgary.

You sailed over on a ship?
Yes. Three times actually. We came over in 1955 and then my mother hated it so we went back. We returned in 1958 and that's when we actually settled. So I crossed on both the Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mary.

That was about a week or so crossing?
Five days.

Was that a lot of fun?
Oh for me it was great, especially the first time. I was all of five years old. It was one of the worst Atlantic crossings in history, and *everybody* was seasick, except me. So I had the run of the ship, and I was all over. I still have in my mind this incredibly vivid moment where I sort of zigged where I should have zagged in the dining room and I went the wrong way and stepped out onto the deck. I can still see in my mind these *huge* waves, these gray waves under a gray sky crashing over the deck and of course I stepped back in immediately. But that's one of the most vivid pictures of my childhood. It was a really horrible crossing, but I didn't know. I was just having a ball.

Have you ever incorporated that situation into anything you have written?
I do like drawing ships getting swamped but I hadn't really connected it to that moment, but, maybe.

Why did your family relocate?
My parents did it mostly for me. They felt that I would have much greater opportunities in Canada than I would ever have had in England. It was a toss up between Australia and Canada and Canada won.

You're an only child?
Yes.

When you were in Canada, it was at that time that you came across the Fantastic Four?
My first exposure to Marvel was in 1962. I think it was Fantastic Four #5, which I now have a page of that hanging on my wall too. That was a seminal event for me, because I had been reading comics for about six years at that point, and all DC. Then along came Marvel with all this wild stuff, and there was this momentary fear that the DC police were going to

JOHN BYRNE

YEAH... YER DOIN' IT JUST FINE, SUSIE... I CAN POKE MY NUTTS THROUGH THIS INVISIBLE WHATSIS--
SKRUNK!!
--NO SCRATCH ONE WEAPONS SYSTEM!
NOT BAD FER A BOY ABOUT TO GET SOCIAL SECURITY!
THERE'S STILL NO TIME, BEN--GALACTUS MUST BE FOUND IMMEDIATELY!
THEN YOU GO FIND 'IM, BIG-DOME. I'M OUT TA GET THE BUGS WHAT TRIED TO --PERFORATE ME!
YA GOTTA UNNERSTAND, STRETCH-- I AIN'T LEAVIN' HERE TILL I DO.
IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, BEN-- LET'S GET DONE WITH THIS PEST!
JOHNNY-- YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHOSE POWERS ARE TOTALLY INTACT-- SCOUT AHEAD QUICKLY AND GET BACK HERE FAST AS YOU CAN!
SURE, LEADERMAN-- I GOT IT!
AND DON'T TRY TO BE A HERO! ALL ON YOUR OWN. GOT THAT, SON?

Fantastic Four # 209; Sinnot inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

come along and slap me around for even daring to look at some other thing. That was an amazing time to be going through as a fan. One didn't really know one was a fan in those days; you just read the books.

Do you have a lot of Kirby originals from that time?
I've got twelve pages hanging here on my wall above my drawing board to keep me humble. I've got a lot of stuff that I was surprised to get. I've got a page each from *Hulk* #4 and #5; I have a page from *X-Men* #5; a page from *FF Annual* #1; got a couple of pages from *FF* #13 that are inked by Ditko. I'm always surprised whenever I see Kirby original art from that time, and of course I always pounce on it whenever anything like that turns up.

When did you think that working in comics might be something that you would like to do for a living?
It actually wasn't until I was in college that penny sort of dropped. In our first year we had to do a special project — actually, let me tell you the *true* version, because that's the short version that I always tell, so I'll give you the long version. The curator of the gallery at the Alberta College of Art knew that I was interested in comics. As a favor to me he brought in a comic book show that was touring at the time. They had all kinds of original artwork. Whenever they had a show in the gallery they would ask somebody to do something that represented the show; like a brochure. So he asked me to do a comic book to be given away with the show. I did this twenty-page, weird *Dungeons and Dragons* kind of thing. A guy who lived in Calgary named John Mansfield, who was a super comic fan, saw this, got my name and number from the college, and he called me up. He asked me, "Is this something you want to do?" That was really the moment at which the penny dropped. I thought, "Wow, yes. Comics don't spring fully grown from Zeus' head. Somebody actually does this." That was the year of my twenty-first birthday and my parents bought me a trip to New York as a

THE FLOODGATES OF HER SOUL BURST OPEN. UNBIDDEN, A TORRENT OF MEMORY WASHES OVER SUSAN STORM RICHARDS.
SUDDENLY, SHE IS ONCE AGAIN TWELVE YEARS OLD AND MEETING FOR THE FIRST TIME THE SHY, BOOK-ISH COLLEGE FRESHMAN WHO HAS TAKEN A ROOM AT HER AUNT'S MANHATTAN BOARDING HOUSE.
THE PEBBLE ONCE AGAIN THE UN-FORGETTABLE PANGS OF FIRST LOVE, A LOVE THAT WILL BURN TRUE AND SURE THROUGH ALL THE YEARS THAT FOLLOW.
A LOVE THAT WILL SURVIVE LONG SEPARATION, AND WILL BRING HER AT LAST TO REED RICHARDS' SIDE, AS HIS EXPERIMENTAL STARSHIP HURLS FOUR DESPERATE COMPANIONS INTO THE VOID. THEY ARE DESTINED TO FAIL, ENDING IN NEAR-DISASTER.
BUT AN EXPOSURE TO COSMIC RAYS, FAR ABOVE THE EARTH'S SHIELDING ENVELOPE OF ATMO-SPHERE, TRANSFORMS THE QUARTET OF ADVENTURERS, AND GIVES THEM WHAT IS THE ORIGINAL FANTASTIC FOUR!
AND, FINALLY, GIVES SUSAN STORM WHAT SHE HAS SO LONG DESIRED, AS SHE BECOMES WIFE OF THE MAN NOW KNOWN AS MISTER FANTASTIC.

Fantastic Four # 291; Russell inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

present. John Mansfield took me down and introduced me to people in the industry. Basically I was told, "Boy you suck. Come back later." About four years later I finally started to get regular work.

How did Mansfield know these people?
He was just a super fan. He was always at conventions and travelling around. He was in the Canadian Armed Forces which meant he could travel around the world free, and he did. He went to all these conventions all over the place.

Growing up were you reading comics continuously?
Pretty much. I stopped reading comics for about six years. I think I stopped around 1964, and I can tell you exactly what it was that stopped me. And I started up again around 1970.

Was it a girl?
No, I wish it had been. That's usually what stops everybody else. But what happened for me was Issue #32 of the *Fantastic Four*. It had a banner on the front cover that read, "Can you guess the identity of our mystery villain?" My parents had both been down on me to stop reading comics. They said, " You're too old for it." I was around sixteen at the time. I got that issue, I read that banner, and by page two, I knew who the villain was. It was the Super-Skrull. And I sort of sat back and said, "I guess my parents my parents are right. I've been reading this too long." So I stopped. Absolutely cold turkey. I gave away all my comics that my mother hadn't thrown away, and just stopped. Unfortunately there were no girls to fill the void, so that was when I really started to get into science fiction.

I've read that you had a deal with your parents that for every one comic book you bought you had to give one away.
I was a very poor student with very bad grades and they, like all parents, sought to find any explanation other than I was bored to tears. They blamed the comics. They were always down on comics. They thought comics were taking away from my education. And this was at the same time that I was reading all kinds of other stuff. I was reading "real" books at the same time so there was really no need for concern. They needed a scapegoat and the comics were it. It was specifically a deal because my mother hated me buying comics and reading comics. When the Marvel stuff started to come along and I started to want to buy Marvel, I had to give up DC. So in order to buy *Avengers* I had to stop buying *JLA*.

Have you bought back all those comics that you had to give away?
Yes. I've reacquired at vast expense all the comics that I used to have.

As a teenager you also interested in Science Fiction. What did you like?
What really jump started it was Star Trek. I can still remember when the first Star Trek episode came on. I always like to sneer at my American friends who saw Star Trek on Fridays because we got it on Tuesdays. I actually saw the first Star Trek episode like three days before anyone else. I can remember that my parents were out working in the garden, and I kept running out there every commercial break saying, "You're got to come in and see this!" My parents ultimately became major Trekkies, but they missed that first episode. So it was Star Trek that got me jump started. As a kid I had read *Have Spacesuit will Travel*, and that made me aware in the back of my mind that there were Science Fiction books, so I went and sought some out. My father had a favorite Science Fiction book called *City at World's End* by Edmond Hamilton which he gave me to read. It is far and away my favorite Science Fiction book of all time. That led me through to Isaac Asimov and his robot novels and short stories and led me through to Arthur C. Clark and Robert Silverburg, and some of the guys who were at the cutting edge at the time like Larry Niven.

You mentioned coming upon the realization that people created comic books for a living. When did you make this realization?
In college. I've always been a slow study. It takes me forever to have things dawn on me that the whole rest of the world has figured out. That was one of them where I sort of said, "Oh yeah, these names in the credits. I know who this Jack Kirby guy is, I know who this Stan Lee guy is." But somehow it didn't hit me, that this was going to work and doing a job. I had never really aimed for it. I always had in

the back of my mind that I would become a commercial artist. I always thought that perhaps the most interesting thing I would ever get to do would be illustrating ads for cars and trucks and stuff like that. Then, as I say, the penny finally dropped. And I went, wait a minute, wow, I can do this! Cool! And off I went.

You went to the Alberta College of Art for Commercial Art?

Yes. Well they tricked me actually. They convinced me to go into Fine Arts because they said that Fine Arts would be a more general program. So they tried to turn me into a painter which didn't work at all. I had intended to go into what they called Ad Art but ended up with Fine Arts as my major, which is probably the reason why I dropped out after two and a half years. They [the people in the Art Department] had kept telling me to find something else to do as I kept focusing more and more on comics.

Joni Mitchell also went to the Alberta College of Art a few years ahead of me. Apparently she and I were both told by the deputy head of the college at that time that we had made the wrong choice, that art was the thing, not this comic book crap, not this music crap, and that we should focus on the arts. Joni apparently quit because of this and I quit because of it.

So what was going on in the time that you dropped out and before you started getting work?

Well, I took about six or eight months to really pump stuff into my comic work, to try and *get* work. That didn't really take, and finally my father said, "You've got to get a job." I ended up getting a job with an outdoor advertising agency, at a place called Hook Signs. I was designing billboards which was, sort of like one-panel storytelling. That lasted for about eleven months. Then with all my sending stuff into fanzines and whatnot I finally caught the attention of Nick Cuti over at Charlton. He asked me if I would do Rog 2000, which was a little character that I had created for Charlton. Actually it was a creation by committee, but I'm the one who ended up getting the credit. At the same time, Tony Isabella asked me if I would do a little one-shot horror story for one of the Marvel black and whites. It was cancelled before the story was ever published. It ended up appearing in *Giant Size Dracula* #5. So my first sale was to Marvel, but the first published work was for Charlton. That led to *Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch*, and that led to *Space 1999*.

MOST CATASTROPHES SPAWN HEROES TO CONQUER THEM, AND NEW YORK IS NO EXCEPTION. IT'S JUST THAT THERE ARE SO MANY CALAMITIES IN THE BIG APPLE THAT HEROES ARE OVERWORKED, WHICH PROBABLY EXPLAINS WHY WHEN CATASTROPHE STRUCK AGAIN
THERE WAS NO ONE AROUND EXCEPT FOR
NO PARKING
WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
ROG
ANY SECOND THAT THING IS GOING TO APPEAR FROM AROUND A CORNER, AND IT'S GOOD-BYE ROGIE!
ROG 2000 vs
EDITOR: GEORGE WILDMAN
SCRIBE: NICOLA CUTI
LIMNER: JOHN BYRNE
EVACUATION

Rog 2000 *TM & © 1999 John Byrne All Rights Reserved.*

Which you also wrote?

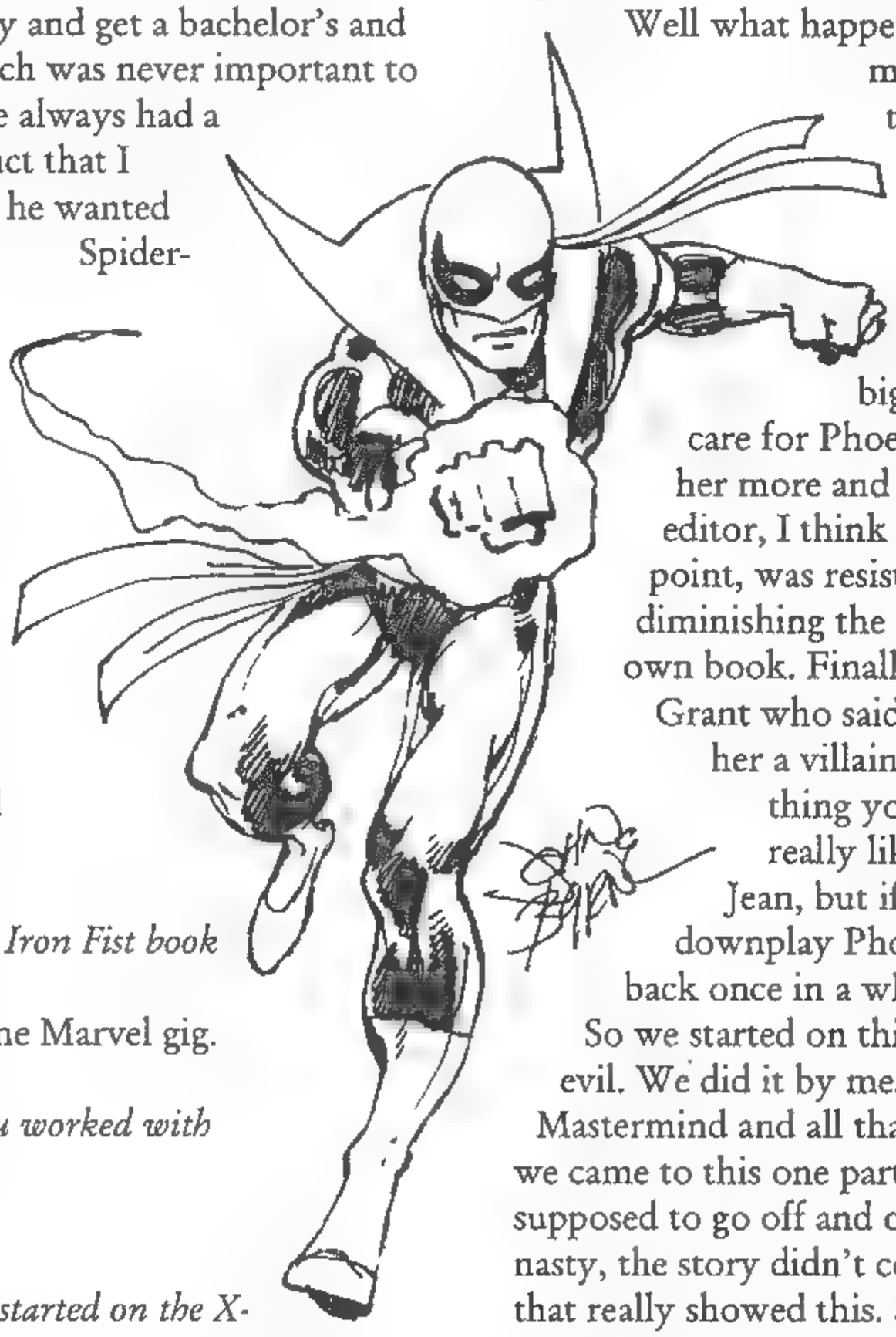
I wrote one issue of *Space 1999*. That was the first time I was paid for professional writing.

When was the Monster Times work?

The *Monster Times* was something that John Mansfield had hooked me up with. I had sent him four or five two-page stories and they bought all of them for like ten dollars a page. Then I think they printed two of them. So somewhere languishing in a drawer somewhere in somebody's house probably is

this unpublished John Byrne stuff that would really really really embarrass me.

What was your parents reaction when they realized that your career was going to be in comics?
I've always told my mother that I hate doing comics and I'm just doing it to spite her. [*laughs*] It's obviously not true. It was very odd because my father always had high hopes for me. He always wanted me to go on to the university and get a bachelor's and master's and all that which was never important to me and I never did it. He always had a lot of trouble with the fact that I ended up being less than he wanted me to be, until I did Spider-Man. When I did Spider-Man, for some reason that was something that he could wrap his mind around. From that point on it was like, "My son does Spider-Man." He'd always called me a commercial artist before that, and that was when he started calling me a cartoonist.



Soon after that you do the Iron Fist book in Marvel Premiere?
This was my first full-time Marvel gig.

Was that the first time you worked with Chris Claremont?
Yes.

Pretty soon after that you started on the X-Men?
I started on the *X-Men* in 1976. I had started full-time with Marvel in 1975, and I think it was in June of 1976 if I remember correctly, that I started drawing the *X-Men*. I can only remember that because I had moved from city to city. I was living in London, Ontario while I did *Star-Lord*, and then I moved back to Calgary. The first issue that I did of the *X-Men* was done in a motel room in Calgary because I didn't have anywhere to live yet.

And you stayed on the X-Men for four years?
For about four years. It was bimonthly for the first half a year or so. I was on it from issues #108 to #143.

Obviously the death of Phoenix storyline was one of the major events that occurred while you were working on the book. I read that just sort of happened, that you threw a panel in?
Well what happened was Phoenix was getting more and more powerful and the X-Men were becoming fifth wheels in their own book, and that really bothered me because I never really liked the Phoenix character. I was a big fan of Jean Grey but I didn't care for Phoenix. Chris wanted to make her more and more powerful, and the editor, I think it was Roger Stern at that point, was resistant to it because it was diminishing the roles of the X-Men in their own book. Finally I think it was Stephen Grant who said, "Well, why don't you make her a villain, and then you can do anything you like with her." I didn't really like the idea of doing that to Jean, but if it meant that we could downplay Phoenix and only have her come back once in a while, I was fully in favor of it. So we started on this campaign to make Phoenix evil. We did it by messing with her head via Mastermind and all that kind of stuff. Then when we came to this one particular issue where she was supposed to go off and officially become evil, bad, nasty, the story didn't contain any kind of a scene that really showed this. She blew up the space ship but it fired on her first, so I just threw in this scene where she went and tortured the asparagus people from Avengers #4, and *that* is what led to her ultimately having to die. Shooter declared after we had drawn #137, it was all done and he said, "No, no, she must be punished for this." He wanted her to be taken off to an asteroid prison and tortured for all of eternity. We didn't like that idea, so we said, no, we'd rather kill her. And we did.

Iron Fist *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

(BACK TO NEW YORK. GOT JET-LAG YET?)

"GO TO MY QUARTERS AND TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES. I SHALL BE ALONG LATER WITH THE WHIP..."

SO WOLVERINE CLIMBS OUT OF DUMBWAITER—

NO, WAIT. THIS ISN'T THE STORY OF GAMBIT'S FOLLOWING—

THANKS HOW HE DIDN'T GET MUCH OUT OF GAMBIT — SO IS FOLLOWING N.C.'S LEAD —

CUNNING UNFORTUNATELY LEADS RIGHT THRU THE PARTY—

X-Men #133; Austin inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

Thinking back, it's been twenty years now since your work on the X-Men. That was really where you came to prominence.
That was where my star ignited. That's what I usually say.

What are your feelings about that period?
It's interesting for me. I was at this convention in Orlando, Florida earlier this year, where I've never been before, so I had an endless line of people who hadn't had the opportunity to have their books signed. So naturally I'm signing a lot of stuff that I haven't seen in a while, and a lot of it was early *X-Men*, from that vintage, and I was just looking at it going, "God I'm glad I learned to draw!" It was really quite wretched. It was funny to look at it because when people would show me their portfolios, and I would say, "You're really not ready yet. You should do this-this-and-this." Then somebody would come up and hand me an *X-Men* to sign, and it was *exactly* the same stuff. If I could talk to John Byrne back then, I'd say, "You're not ready yet. You should do this-this-and-this." So it's very strange for me to look back on my work and think that I became someone in the industry based on work that I really don't think is worth the paper it was printed on.

Unpublished last page from the Dark Phoenix Saga

When do you think you became ready?
Next week sometime, if things go according to plan. I've never ever been satisfied with my own work. I've always been the worst John Byrne detractor out there. I can't stand it. I've developed this habit over the years of, draw the book, send it in, and a week or so later go back and look at the Xeroxes, so I can say, "Oh, it really *doesn't* suck." I've really had to condition myself to just do it, get it done, and a week from now it really won't look that bad. I know I would just be constantly redrawing and redrawing and that one page would never get done.

While you were doing the X-Men, you were also doing the Avengers?
Yes. There was a period there where I was doing the *X-Men*, the *Avengers*, and the *Fantastic Four* at the same time.

I'm sure that didn't make you crazy did it?
Not hardly at all, no. [*laughs*]

While you're penciling the Fantastic Four, you also begin writing it. That was your first opportunity to write a major continuing series?
Yes. Originally I was just supposed to write it. I'd been agitating to write something and Jim Shooter had decided that Doug Moench wasn't quite "happening" on the FF, so he asked me if I would like to write it with Bill Sienkiewicz, and I said, "Sure that would be cool." I began to work towards material that I thought Bill would be drawing. Then Bill decided he wanted to go with Doug over to *Moon Knight*. So suddenly we didn't have an artist, and I said, "The hell with it, I'll draw it myself." Terry Austin, who

Unpublished Superman page. TM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

was supposed to be inking it, couldn't for whatever reason, and it became one of those things like, "We can get Joe Schmuck over here who isn't doing anything." So I ended up doing the inking myself. That was a major learning process. I didn't have a *clue* [about inking] as you can very clearly see in that first year of the FF's.

In the mid-eighties you do your first work for DC, on Superman. DC wasn't sure they were going to continue with your version of Superman.
Well, what happened was I agreed to do the book almost a year before it came out. I would go to conventions and I would say, "We're doing this, we're doing that." And NBC news picked up on the story that we were going to change Superman. They sent a team to my house to interview me. I gave them a story, and they excerpted little sound bites, and they threw in visuals that had nothing to do with my soundbites. In order to illustrate the direction I was taking, I said, "Superman is going to be a little less Mary Worth, and a little more Dirty Harry." Well Dirty Harry wasn't the buzz word in vogue at that time, so they cut from me saying Dirty Harry, to footage of Rambo blowing stuff up, and then they came back with the announcer saying, "So that's Superman. He's going to be an eighties kind of guy with a taste for white wine and brie — which of course those words never left *my* mouth — and a kind of Rambo attitude." And of course the fans went ballistic. DC was deluged with mail saying, "What are you doing?! You're going to destroy Superman!!" And DC backed off. They were committed to do it, but they backed off as far as they possibly could without actually saying, "Don't do it." So for the two years that I was doing the book I got almost no support from DC. Everything I did — and this was the maddening thing about it — everything I did was approved, every word I wrote was approved by the DC editorial offices, but the support wasn't there.

Superman pinup
TM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.

DC wouldn't let you go off and do something that they wouldn't want done.
Exactly. It's one of those odd things. To this day, I have this reputation that I just walk in and say, "Gimme." I'm doing this *X-Men* book, called the *Hidden Years*, which is supposed to be earlier adventures of the X-Men, and fans are freaking out because I'm going to "mess with things." I keep saying, "I *can't* mess with things. This is set in the *past*. I can't change anything because I have to hit the status quo that was established in *Giant Size X-Men* #1." They say, "You're John Byrne, you'll find a way." And I say, "Well, I don't know what planet you live on but I'm the guy who got fired off of *She-Hulk* because I didn't agree with the editor."

In the early 90's you began doing your own creator-owned material through Dark Horse.
That was just one of those, "it's time" kind of things. It came out of a kind of creative frustration that I was feeling. I realized that working for DC and working for Marvel I was trapped by the universes that I was in. There was no way that I could ever do the first alien contact story, or the first time travel story,

Batman and Captain America BatmanTM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. Captain America TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

because they'd all been done a hundred times before. What I needed was a virgin universe. I made up my own, and offered it to Dark Horse, and they were delighted to have it.

What would you say is the most fulfilling thing you've done, creatively speaking?

Next Men had its own level of fulfillment. I've been very lucky. Just about everything that I've worked on has had it's degree of fulfillment. Really, the single most fulfilling thing that I've ever done was *Batman/Captain America*. When I drew the last line in the book, I really wanted to drop dead so that would be my epitaph. This story that had been percolating in my head for twenty years, it finally came out, and it came out in gushes; it flowed. There wasn't a long line in that book for me. *Darkseid vs Galactus* was sort of my practice. It was a book that I really enjoyed doing, but it had only been in my head for six months. *Batman/Captain America* really started as Batman of Earth II with Captain America on Earth II. It was really around the time of the first *Superman/Spider-Man* that I started thinking about *Batman/Captain* America on Earth II so it could be set during WWII.

Generations is a story in the same vein, isn't it?

Generations is about Superman and Batman, as if they aged in real time from 1939. I refer to this as the Bat/Cap sequel that we don't have to pay Marvel for. Because it very clearly takes place in the same reality of Batman/Captain America. In fact, the characters of Batman and Robin who are in the epilogue of Batman/Captain America turn up as Batman and Robin

in *Generations*. But it's very much set in the same reality. In fact, I'm trying to think of some way to have a blonde-haired guy named Steve wander through without us getting sued. [*laughs*]

You recently finished runs on both Wonder Woman and Jack Kirby's Fourth World. Was Fourth World a lot of fun for you to work on?
Yeah, but exhausting. That's the main reason I left it. I realized your average mortal like me has to pump it up to 250% to even come close to what Kirby did. It was a physically exhausting book. On both *Wonder Woman* and *Fourth World*, I realized I was running out of stories about the same time that my contract was ending.

So there's no truth to the rumor that it was not an amiable split?
No. Not at all. It was fine. Fans love to run away with stuff, you know. I've expressed my displeasure at Orion being in the Justice League, therefore, that is the reason that I left *Fourth World*. Well, no.

Fans now have the medium of the internet to disseminate information. You're on the net often, aren't you?
It started because I had this foolish notion that if I was actually in there responding to stuff it would slow the rumors down. But now all it means is that they extract my quotes out of context, and run the rumors even more. Sometimes they'll take the exact quote, but they'll come up with an entirely different spin on what I originally meant.

It must be aggravating.
That's a word.

STRIKE LEFT CHAMPION! THAT SIDE IS WEAKEST!
ONCE MORE HE MAKES A CRYPTIC REFERENCE TO HIS PAST—HIS LONG PAST.
I CAN GIVE THAT FOR MYSELF, WOMAN!
I WAS FIGHTING MONSTERS SUCH AS THIS BEFORE YOU WERE CALLED FORTH FROM THE LIFE-BOG CLAY OF PARADISE ISLAND!
WHO IS THIS MAN WHO CALLS HIMSELF CHAMPION? AND, APHRODITE GUIDE ME...
CRASH
Wonder Woman *TM & © 1999 DC Comics, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

About two or three years ago you did Amazon.
Was it really that long ago? Wow.

You were pencilling, and Terry Austin was inking. Bring back any memories?
Oh yes. It was interesting because Terry and I have both come a long way from the days of *X-Men*. My pencilling is not nearly so tight, and his inking is not nearly so mechanical. So the combination is different. A lot of the fans wrote in and said, "We don't like this." And that's because I'm not *that* John Byrne and he's not *that* Terry Austin. We're both twenty years older.

That was the first time in a while where you had someone other than yourself ink your work.
Yeah. I'm trying to think what would have been the last time before that. Tom Palmer inked the *Wonder Woman Annual*, but I think that was after *Amazon*. Yeah, that was probably the first time in many years, probably since *Star Brand* that somebody else has inked my work.

Is John Byrne the best inker for John Byrne?
Hard to say. I think the best inker for John Byrne was Jerry Ordway. I absolutely loved the stuff that Jerry did on FF. Certainly when I ink my own pencils, as I say, I am my own worst critic. But when I ink my own stuff at least I know it's going to be the line I wanted it to be, which is always an advantage. I've worked with many inkers down through the years, and some of them get a little too interpretive sometimes. I've worked with inkers where it seems as though they think their job

is to *just* miss the line that the penciller has put on the page. Of course if you do that with say, a face, you end up changing the expression completely. There was one inker I was working with who was actually re-drawing my faces and changing expressions. This was a guy who had been in the business all day, when I'd been in the business for ten or fifteen years.

You talked about Generations, and we know you have twelve issues of Spider-Man coming out.
Thirteen, actually. At the end there will be a zero issue.

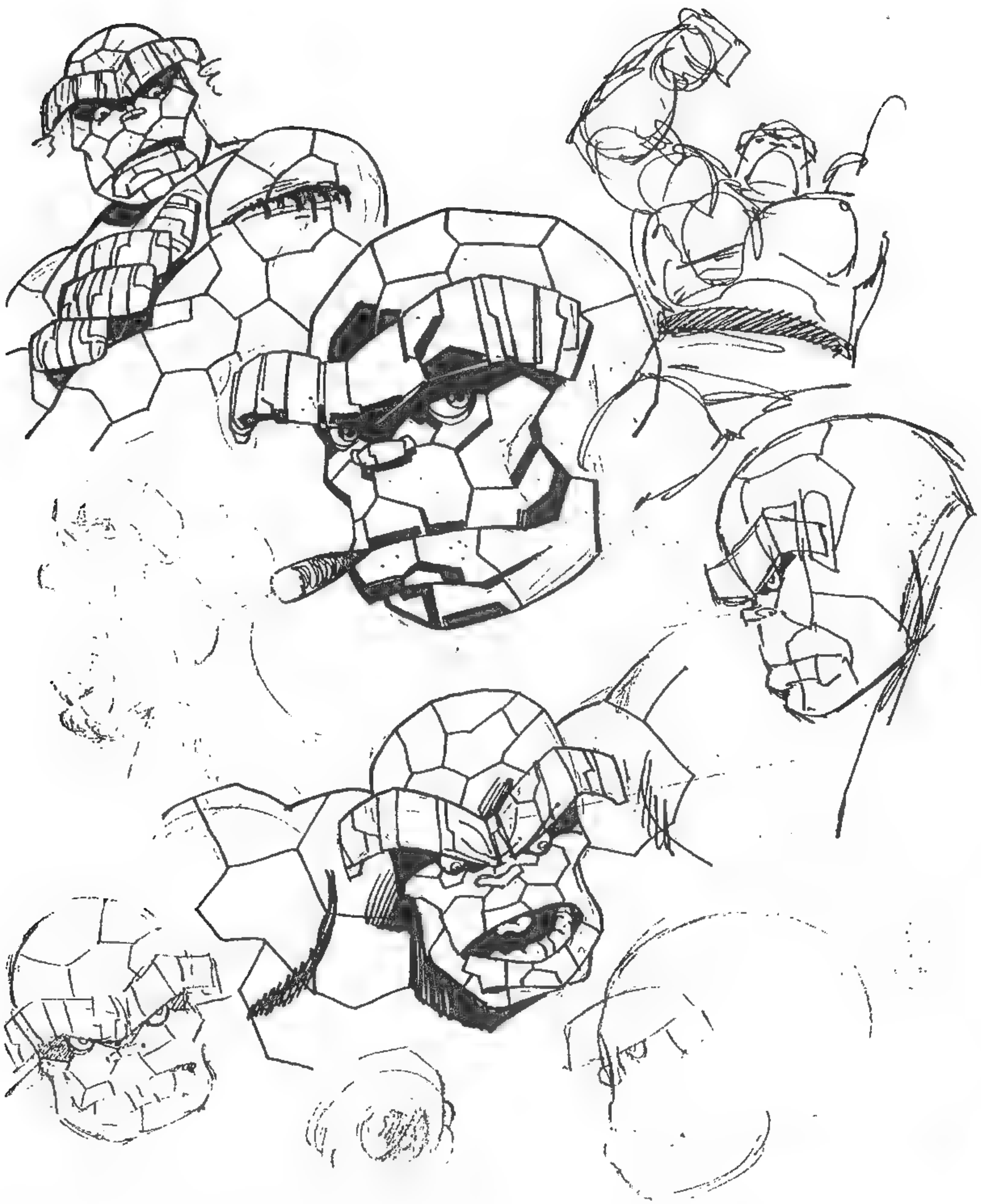
And you'll be doing some work on X-Men?
Yeah. I've lined that up after *Spider-Man*, because I'm doing two Spider-Man books at the same time during this year, and I figure after that I'll be burned out with that character. I'm also currently writing the *Hulk*. After my *Spider-Man* commitment ends, roughly in October 1999, I'll be doing a book with the working title *X-Men the Hidden Years*. The story is what happened with the original team while their book was in reprint. They're going to have some busy times basically because I'm going to have all my stories take place before the Beast left.

Will that be a limited series?
That's an on-going series as planned.

Anything else definite that you have planned?
No nothing else, but I've been talking to Paul Kupperberg about what I want to do when I come back to DC after I finish up *Spider-Man*. I have the *X-Men* book lined up, but I don't have a another one yet. I've decided that I want to be Mr. Miniseries for a while so we've been talking about doing things like Hippolyta as Wonder Woman in WWII. There's also possibly an Artemis mini, and possibly a Demon mini, and possibly Hawkman and Doom Patrol, and all these other things. Any one of which will probably never happen, but these are the things we've been discussing. ❖

JOKE? YOU SEE HUMOR IN THIS, MORTAL?
I DO NOT!
I SEE ONLY A FOOLISH OLD GOD WHO HAS FORGOTTEN HIS PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE!
INSOLENCE!
I HAD THOUGHT TO GRANT YOU A QUICK AND PAINLESS DEATH. A SMALL REPAYMENT FOR THE MANY YEARS OF DEVOTION PAID TO ME OF OLYMPUS BY YOU OF THEMYSCIRA.
BUT BY YOUR WORDS HAVE YOU EARNED YOURSELF A LONG AND LINGERING DEATH.
BY YOUR ARROGANCE HAVE YOU EARNED A PASSAGE FROM THIS WORLD THE LEAST DESCRIPTIVE WORD OF WHICH WILL FREEZE THE MARROW IN A MORTAL'S BONES!
AHH-GH!!!

Amazon *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. and TM & © 1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.*



The Thing character sketch *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

How John Byrne Creates Comics

Let's talk a little bit about how you work now. When you sit down to do a book, and you're going to be doing the writing, pencilling, inking, and lettering, how do you go about it?

Well, the first thing that you need to know about all that is that I do my lettering with a computer font. That means that the first job done is that I sit down, and type myself up a full script.

So in essence, you're going back to a full script method?
Yeah. Basically I type myself little art guidelines, and little indications of who's talking so I know, when I come back to that page, which can be as much as three months later. That way I know who it is, what they're saying, and why they're doing what they're doing. Generally speaking, I usually start work at 7 a.m. and I write for the first hour of the day, sit at the computer and write, and then from roughly 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. I draw, approximately three pages a day. I take three of the pages that are written, sit down and paste all the lettering onto the page, layout the page, the panel shape, and the lettering, sketch in the artwork, ink in the balloon shaped from the panel borders, and pick up my brush and start inking.

Splash from the *How to Draw Comics Comic*. 1985

You ink with a brush?
Yes.

And obviously your pencils are not tight at all.
No. The pencils are very loose when I'm inking my own work.

You've said that you've created your own font on the computer for lettering.
Yes. I've used several fonts. The one I'm using right now is Jack Morelli's; he's a Marvel letterer, and he called me up one day and asked what I would charge to make a font for him. I said "I charge that I get to use it." So I made Jack a font, and I think it was *Danger Unlimited* that I first used it on and quite liked it. When I went back to DC and started doing *Wonder Woman* I used that one instead of the font I was using on *Next Men*, which is what I called my "Walt Kelly font" because I had adapted it from the lettering in *Pogo*. So I type this up, and I print it out on this clear self-adhesive acetate called Copi-Tak which is kind of like zip-a-tone. It's like a blank zip-a-tone. So I just cut out the caption shapes with an Exacto knife and put them down on the page and then manually draw the balloon shapes.

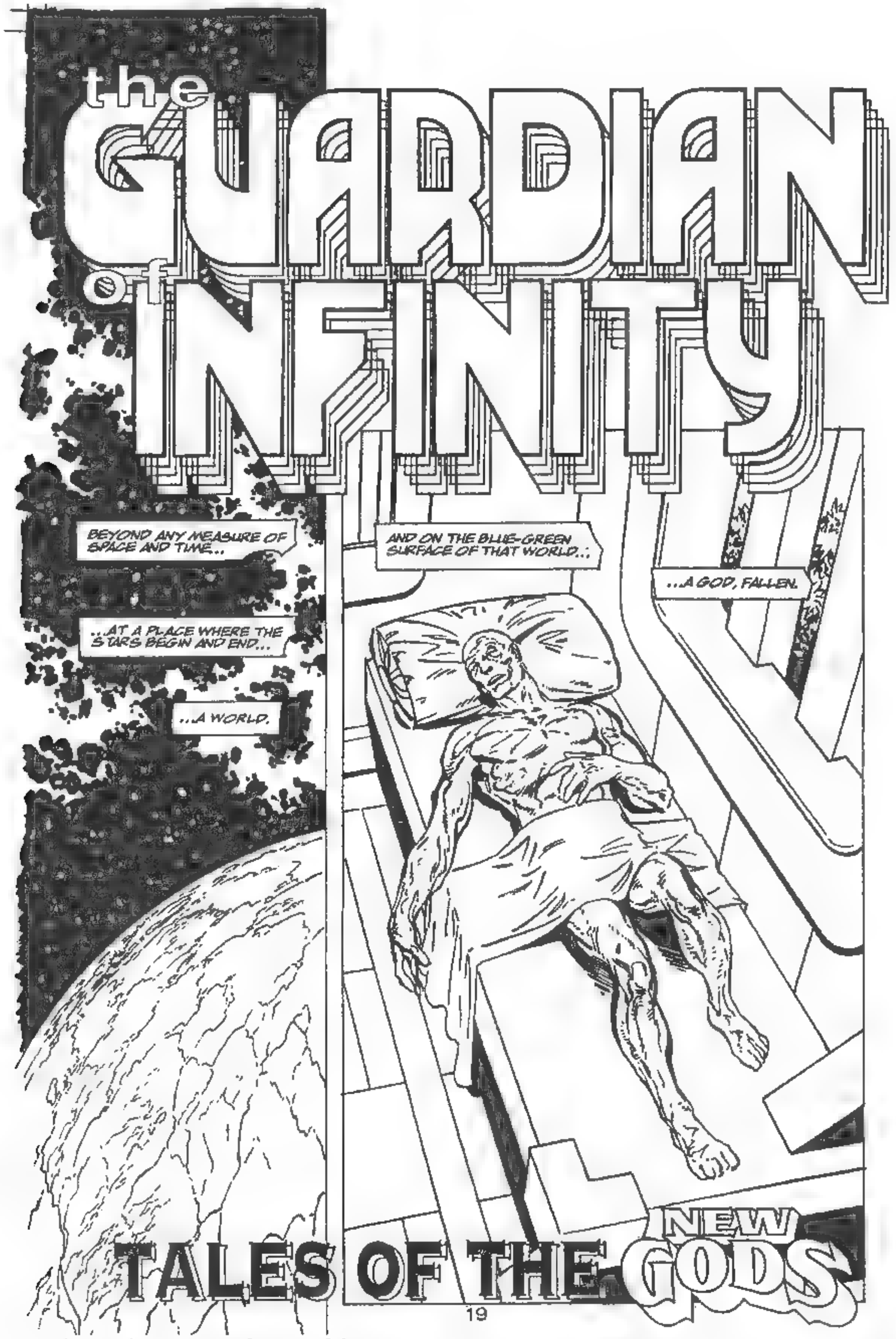
Do you prefer doing all this yourself?
Yeah, I'm a control freak. I like to control as much of it as I possibly can.

But not the coloring?
Well, no. I'm color-blind to begin with. But I've found that it takes me about four hours to color a page. So it's just not cost-effective. It takes me two hours to draw it and four hours to color it.

So when you talk about doing three pages a day it's . . .
It's pencils, inks, and lettering. In fact I just finished as we were speaking, my third page [*Jack Kirby's Fourth World* #18, p.19]. Actually, I prefer to talk on the phone when I work. I find that if I'm talking on the phone and drawing I sort of zen out, and I come back, and goblins have come in and finished the page. The best stuff I ever do is when I'm talking on the phone and not paying attention to it because I don't freeze up.

When you're not talking on the phone, do you have the TV or the radio on?
No. I work in total silence if I'm not on the phone. People come up to me and say, "John, how do you do

so much work?" And I say, "Well, let me tell you why you *don't* do so much. You've got a TV in your studio, haven't you?" And they say, "Yeah." Get rid of the TV. Get rid of the radio. Get rid of all distractions, and everything is on the page.


the GUARDIAN of INFINITY
BEYOND ANY MEASURE OF SPACE AND TIME...
..AT A PLACE WHERE THE STARS BEGIN AND END...
..A WORLD.
AND ON THE BLUE-GREEN SURFACE OF THAT WORLD...:
..A GOD, FALLEN.
TALES OF THE NEW GODS
19

Jack Kirby's Fourth World #18, p.19 *TM & © 1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.*

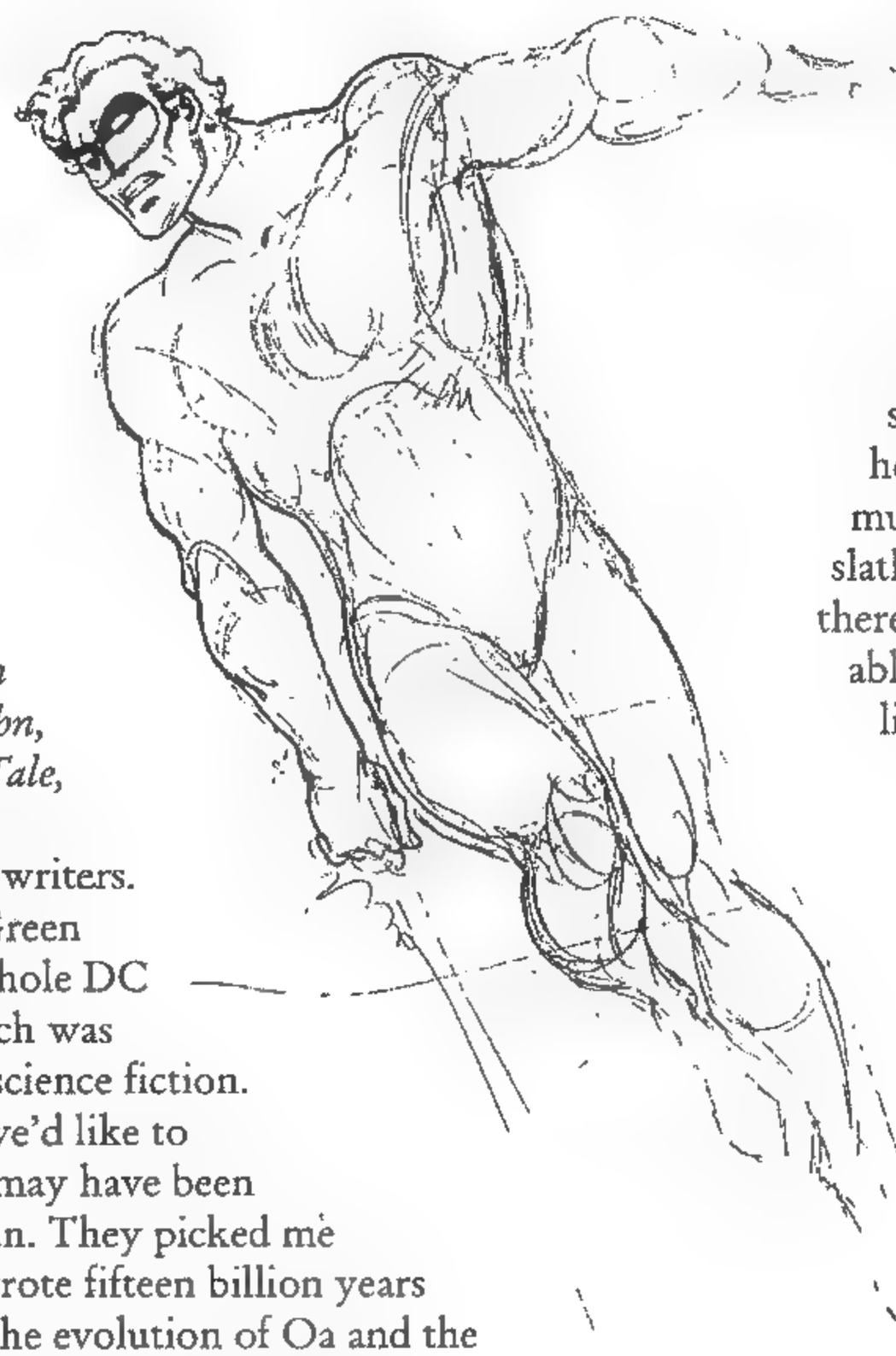
The Tale Behind Ganthet's Tale

Larry Niven

How did you first meet John Byrne?
After several invitations, I finally attended a San Diego Comic Con, which I loved. In fact I still go to them.

At one of these, John Byrne and Chris Claremont recognized my name badge. By way of introduction, they gave me two black and white oversized sheets, an intermediate stage in comic book building. These were two views of the Kree-Lar Galaxy High Council, both attended by a variety of species . . . including a Pierson's puppeteer and a Kzin, both from my work.

What was your reaction the first time you saw a puppeteer or a Kzin show up in a background that John drew?
I loved it. I rapidly learned to think "homage" rather than "copyright violation." Otherwise I could ruin my lifestyle.



How did the Green Lantern project that you did with John, Green Lantern: Ganthet's Tale, come about?
DC sent out a letter to SF writers. "We're rationalizing the Green Lantern premises — the whole DC background universe, which was originally supposed to be science fiction. Here's a list of questions we'd like to resolve . . ." I answered. I may have been the only one, but it was fun. They picked me to do the whole thing: I wrote fifteen billion years of DC history, including the evolution of Oa and the Guardians. Having done that, and after my premises were accepted, I wrote notes for a graphic novel I thought I'd been invited to write. I created the youngest Guardian, Ganthet, two billion years old and a bit naive.

For awhile it lay in limbo, but eventually John Byrne got tagged as my collaborator. He naturally did most of the work since I don't know how to make a comic book!

Currently Ganthet is the only surviving Guardian, most Green Lanterns are dead or badly in need of counseling, and . . . let's say that many of my premises have become moot.

John Byrne

You actually got to work with Larry Niven on a project together.

Larry and I have turned out to be buddies which is a hoot for me. I met him the first time I went to the San Diego Con. Japanese animators were giving a cocktail party, so I was down there sucking on a coke in the corner and I saw this guy standing at the bar that I recognized as Larry Niven. So I sort of drew myself up to my full height and walked over. Trying as much as I could not to sound like a slathering fanboy I just said, "Hi there, I'm John Byrne, you've probably never heard of me but I really like your stuff. I really think your Puppeteers are cool and anytime I can I put a Puppeteer into one of my comics." And he named one of the scenes. He said, "Oh yeah, like in such-and-such." It turns out that Larry has a fondness for sitting in the sauna and the only reading material that will survive sitting in a sauna is comic books. He was a big comic book fan. So that sort of led to us saying we should work together sometime. Finally we did do *Green Lantern: Ganthet's Tale*.

Green Lantern *TM & ©1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.*

Cover from X-Men #137; Austin inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

John's Early Editors

Nick Cuti

You were one of the first people to hire John.
Yes, his first professional work, anyway.

Do you remember what you saw in his work at the time that caused you to hire him?
A group of people called the CPL Gang came To Charlton. Bob Layton was sort of the head of it, John was a member of it, and Roger Stern was also a member. They were fans of Charlton, and they wanted to publish a fanzine based on Charlton. They had published some amateur publications which were pretty good. I was very surprised at the quality of it. One of the artists was John Byrne. He had this little character called Rog 2000, a robot, very shiny and very muscular. He was in the CPL Gang's little booklet they used to hand out. We decided that we were going to try superheroes at Charlton. At the time, I was the assistant editor and George Wildman was the editor at Charlton. George had talked the publishers into doing superheroes, which is something that Charlton had not been too successful with. They had done superheroes in the past (Blue Beetle, Thunderbolt) but they hadn't been too successful with it. They had been more successful with adventure, war, and romance, which everyone else stayed away from. Then we talked them into doing superheroes, and I came up with E-Man. I called up Joe Staton and we started it up. We decided we were going to save a few pages in the back for other superheroes that we could try out. And I think they [CPL Gang] approached me to do a series with John's character, Rog 2000. So I said, "Sure." I loved the robot, and I liked John's artwork. I thought he was a really talented artist. I wrote a couple of stories on this character Rog 2000 as the life of a robot amongst human beings. We did it for maybe four or five issues as a back-up feature. Then *E-Man* ended with issue #10, and that meant the end of Rog as well. Joe Gill had come up with an idea for a series called *Doomsday + 1*, and by then John was one of our favorite cartoonists, so Joe requested that John be the illustrator for *Doomsday + 1*. It was supposed to be a post-apocalyptic world. From there on in, John just seemed to take off.

When I looked back at those early E-Man issues, I was struck at the similarities between Joe Staton's style and John's at that time.
Well I had a lot to do with that because I like that style of art. I requested Joe do *E-Man* and of course when John wanted to do the backup feature I was thrilled. I was a great fan of *Plastic Man* when I was a kid. I always felt that *Superman* was interesting but the artwork was boring. When John did *Superman* I thought he did a really nice job with it.

You also worked on Space 1999 together?
Yes. I did a few issues with Joe Staton and then John had a few ideas for *Space 1999*, and he did a few issues. In fact, he even wrote one or two of them. I had written several of the issues and then John wrote a few.

What do you think is John Byrne's strongest point?
Storytelling and his own unique style are his strongest points. He has his own style. It's not a super-realistic style, it's comic book. That I think is his strongest point. When you open up a publication you say, "Oh, John Byrne, there's no question about it." The storytelling is very good. He's really top notch as far as that goes. So many comics, you look at the stories, and you look at page after page and you see all this pretty art but you don't know what's going on. You should be able to get a rough idea of a story just by looking at the art. You should read the words to get the details of the story. With John you can do that.

Rog 2000 *TM & © 1999 John Byrne All Rights Reserved.*

You can look through his pages and without reading the words you can more or less tell what's going on and what's happening. In so many other comic books you see lots of beautiful splashy artwork but you don't know what the heck is going on. Then the comic book becomes a portfolio. A portfolio is okay once but you need a story in order to keep the people coming back.

You have to be able to convey that story.
Right. And John conveys it beautifully. He has his own unique style. It's typically John's, and that's a very strong point. ❖

TONY ISABELLA

You were one of the first editors to hire John to work on a story. How did all of that come about?
I first became acquainted with John and his work through the late Duffy Vohland. Duffy and a group of Midwestern fans, including Bob Layton and Roger Stern, were publishing a fanzine called CPL. The zine published some of John's earliest work. Shortly thereafter, John started coming to New York to break into comics.

The first *professional* Byrne submission I recall seeing was a thirty-page *Fantastic Four* story which he had plotted and drawn. It was a neat little concept, Johnny Storm meeting, falling in love with, and losing the Crystal of Counter-Earth. It needed a strong inker, but I thought Marvel should buy it. Unfortunately, there was a lot of resistance to John's work from other Marvel editors. I was able to give him some work on FOOM magazine and on the black-and-white horror magazines I was editing, but I could never get the okay for him to do a regular series.

His break came at Marvel when the company needed an issue of *Iron Fist* in a matter of days. He came through and stayed on the series. Prior to that, he had been doing work for Charlton Comics.

What do you feel is John's strongest point in telling a story? Writing, the pencilling . . ?
The lettering. Seriously, I think John is at his best when he's both writing and drawing the story. It's hard for me to distinguish the two. Certainly his collaborations with writers like Chris Claremont and Roger Stern have been terrific, but I think he's one of the rare breed that's at his best doing it all himself.

Any amusing stories that you could share with us about John?
When he was trying to break in, he was this refreshing combination of cocky, earnest, and desperate. I mean, he tried to get the job penciling "It, the Living Colossus" once. I wanted to hire him for it, too.

I also remember him somewhat sheepishly admitting, many ears later, that he had used my face as the model for his version of the Prankster. This was while he was drawing Superman. We settled out of court. I got a drawing of the character.

ROGER STERN

Can you describe the experience of editing John and Chris on the X-Men?
It was quite a bit of fun. *X-Men* was the most consistently good title I edited. That was mostly because we had a strong creative team — and the same creative team — there every issue, month after month. We even had Tom Orzechowski and Glynis Oliver there most issues, and — let me tell you — keeping the same letterer and colorist from issue to issue wasn't always easy at Marvel in those days. It was always wonderful to open up the envelopes and check out the new penciled pages from John and inked pages from Terry. And while I didn't contribute directly to the book's plotting, I did encourage Chris to go in directions that John and I found more interesting. I'm quite proud to have been part of that mix.

How did you first meet John?
I first met John in New York, in 1974, just before one of the late Phil Seuling's July 4th Comicons. That was our first face-to-face meeting, of course. We'd been corresponding for a year or so before as part of our work on Bob Layton's old fanzine, CPL.

What does CPL stand for?
Contemporary Pictorial Literature

Were you part of the group (John and Bob being two of the others) that went to Charlton trying to get work? If so, how did that come about?
Sort of. Here's how it happened: Nick Cuti saw the first Rog 2000 strip, which we had done for CPL, at that 1974 comic convention. That was also when we premiered the "Charlton Portfolio" issue of CPL. Nick liked the strip and needed a new back-up feature for *E-Man*. This resulted in John getting regular assignments at Charlton. Nick and George Wildman liked the Portfolio so much that Bob got the nod to produce *Charlton Bullseye*. This led to his getting some professional work. And I wound up scripting a Steve Ditko *Captain Atom* story which had been in the drawer at Charlton for nearly a decade . . . which sort of led to me getting some work (none of it published).

What was the first project that you collaborated with John on?
That would have been the short Rog 2000 story for CPL.

What do you think is the ultimate John Byrne work?
John's "ultimate work" has yet to be produced. Ask me again in 20 to 30 years. ❖

Phoenix *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

ROMITA SR.

john

I've read that you were familiar with John's work, but had difficulty finding a job for him to do. Is that true?
Well you know I never assigned any work, so I never had the opportunity. But I would show his work to the editors. I know that Marv Wolfman was trying to get him work at Marvel and elsewhere for quite a while. His work was very good at the time although he doesn't agree. I thought he had a Kirby-oriented approach. I remember thinking that it was a Jack Kirby spin-off. Maybe it was in my mind because so many of us learned the superhero approach from Jack. I assumed that he was emulating Jack, and I didn't think any less of him because of it. I thought the best way to approach it was to approach it the way Jack would have.

You've seen his work for many years. What do you think is his strongest point as a creator?
I think that's a key word, *creator*. He's a triple threat; he's a writer, a penciller, and an inker, not to mention that he does lettering as well. He's actually a renaissance man in comics. There are others like Joe Kubert who are the same way. Joe Kubert would never entertain the idea of pencilling for somebody else to ink it and vice versa, although he did it when he was younger. But guys like Joe Kubert, John Byrne, and John Buscema are capable of doing it all, as opposed to the rest of us that specialized in pencils because we were not fast enough to specialize in pencils and ink. I have always been half of a team, and John Byrne is a real renaissance man and he can do the whole thing. He can conceive of great projects, which I also find an amazing ability. Typically that is the reserve of editors and writers; to come up with concepts. But John's that kind of guy, he can handle the whole thing.

The other thing that I admire about John is that he is an innovator in so many other ways. He's the guy that started breaking the ground on the computer generated material. I think that's a very important feature of his approach. He's very open to innovative ideas and he's very inventive. He started doing computer-generated art on the books years ago. He also generated a lettering font to be done for computer lettering. He's way ahead of his time. I consider him, like I said, to be a renaissance man and a genius. That's one of the facets that I don't think most people remember or mention. He started doing cornerbox art on the covers that was generated by computer.

What do you mean by the cornerbox?
The cornerbox on the comic books. You know, where there's a shot of the character in the corner where it says Marvel Comics. I remember when he was doing *She-Hulk* he took a shot of a model and used it as a guide. He turned it into a semi-photographic image of the She-Hulk in a beautiful evening gown and used it up in the cornerbox. And when he did it he turned it into the green skinned She-Hulk. It was a very impressive piece of art. I think he started to use computer generated art way before anyone else did. I think he blazed trails.

Another aspect about John is that he does have a respect for the history of characters. That's another thing that I admire about him. Even though he does want to bring his

> "He's actually a renaissance man in comics."

own look to things, he does not like to abandon everything that has gone before. He is steeped in the past history of characters and if he makes a change, it's from a sincere belief that it needs the change. That's where his editorial/writing concept comes in. The revamping of *Superman* was an amazing accomplishment. He's got the big picture ability: to stand back and look at the big picture and make huge changes and still keep it fairly true to the original;. I think he's in a class by himself.

What do you think of his work ethic?
I don't know what his work ethic is, but if I had any brains I would have gone and spent a couple of days with him up in his studio to see how he does it. All I know is that he produces a tremendous amount of work. He keeps two companies in pages! I don't know how he does it. To me, to think of something abstract and to put it down on paper, I find it a very stop-and-go process. I have to think about it, I have to surround it, but he goes right to it. Jack Kirby and John Buscema were also able to turn out tremendous amounts of work. ❖

!! FANTASTIC! INCREDIBLE! NEVER HAVE WE SEEN SUCH A FEMALE!
YES, SCIENTIST! WE AUTHORIZE WHATEVER BUDGETARY APPROPRIA-TIONS ARE NEEDED!
GET US THE SHE-HULK!
THAT WAS THE SUB-PLOT? WHAT ABOUT THE MAHKISMO THING?
YOU WANT TO BE CAREFUL, BYRNSIE. ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL HAVE ONE TOO MANY SUB-PLOTS IN THE AIR AT THE SAME TIME...
...AND THEY'LL ALL COME CRASHING DOWN ON YOUR FUZZY LITTLE HEAD!
ANYWAY...WHILE YOU WERE ALL OFF IN DIMENSION Z I GOT THE ZOMBIES ALL STITCHED UP...
AND THE COPS HAVE COLLECTED THE BLACK TALON.

She-Hulk *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

DAN JURGENS

You both worked on Superman #50. Have you collaborated on other projects together?
There was a cross-over between an issue of *Booster Gold* and *Action Comics* back when John was writing and drawing *Action Comics*. He inked me on the cover to *Booster* which, I think, was issue #23.

When you first started work on Superman, how much did you go back, if at all, and look at what John had done?
When I first did the *Adventures of Superman* Annual #1, John was still doing the regular books and I certainly took a look at what he was doing to try and make sure the general appearance of Superman was consistent. Once I started appearing on the regular books with *Superman* #29, I tried to distance myself from his work and find my own "artistic voice" for the character. Remember that the transition from Curt Swan to John Byrne was a Big Thing, such a bold move by DC at the time that I didn't want to look foolish by trying to draw the book the way John did.

Superman *TM & © 1999 DC Comics. All Rights Reserved.*

In the book Comic-Book Superstars, you refer to John as "a study in professionalism." Why?
We now live in an era where creators seem to feel that doing a monthly book for 12 issues in a row is equivalent to climbing Mount Everest in bare feet. When I was a kid, a simple reader and fan, I was always tremendously bummed out if one of my favorite artists took a month off. And two in a row really threw me for a leap.

John is to be admired for his work ethic because once he takes on a project he's there month after month, as writer and penciller, sometimes inker and even letterer. I believe that helps create a bond with a title's readers and it's a lesson that seems lost on many of today's creators. Look over the first 100 issues of *Fantastic Four* and tell me how many fill-ins Jack Kirby had. Deep down, I feel that kind of commitment earns something back from readers.

You mention John writing, pencilling, often inking his own books. Is there any one area where you have been influenced the most?
Like most people, I first became aware of John's work at Charlton. In my book, his breakthrough project was the *Star-Lord* black and white book he and Terry Austin did for Marvel. I remember liking John's work a great deal back then because his people looked rather natural without looking stiff and he dealt with character nuance, a rarity back then.

One of John's greatest assets is that he seems able to draw any title in existence and be an appropriate choice to do so. Very few artists can claim that skill.

Of the different types of work John does, and again I mean writing, pencilling, etc., what do you think is his strongest and why? Or is the complete John Byrne project (except of course coloring) what he excels in, in your opinion?
I've come to think of John as not a writer or penciller or inker, but more as a storyteller. Someone who uses the mythos of a character as his canvas. John seems uniquely able to delve into a character's individual reason for existence and exploit it well.

So far, what do you think is the best work John has done and why? The *Star-Lord* black and white, his run on the *X-Men* and his *Captain America* work at Marvel are all great. His *Batman/Captain America* book was a lot of fun as well, as was his *Omac* mini-series. But Batman/Cap captured a particular era very well and that's sometimes harder to do than it appears so that would probably get my nod.

JERRY ORDWAY

In what ways would you say you've been influenced by John Byrne?
John had done the relaunch on the *Man of Steel*, and I was set to draw *Adventures of Superman*. Marv Wolfman wrote it for a year and then when he left, John took over and I got my opportunity at that point to co-plot, which is what I wanted to do. I wanted to have a little bit more story input.

I learned a lot from John. I learned a lot from working with him. He was very gracious I must say, as far as allowing me credit for co-plotting. That definitely put me on the road to actually making the jump to artist *and* writer. About a year later when John left the Superman books I got the opportunity to write my own stuff.

I also learned a lot from inking him at the time when we were doing the *Fantastic Four*. John's very good at surface textures. A lot of artists have one texture for everything. A tree might as well be made out of metal. Inkers will do that too sometimes, they won't adjust their pen or brush line to the actual surface texture of whatever they're inking. John was always good at throwing in some little noodling which at first you might not realize what it was, but when you got into it, you'd say, "Oh of course. That's a little reflection off of a puddle." It was that little detail which I think really made his work. Most anybody can draw big super heroic figures in action. But not everybody can do them with some sense of dynamics. John was good at the little details. People forget that about him in a sense because they think he's known for big superhero action. But he's also good at giving life to things.

Was the Fantastic Four the first project you worked on together?
I was supposed to do *Squadron Supreme* with John; he was going to draw and I was going to do the finishes. We actually did an ad while I was still working on *Infinity Inc.* at DC. I did an ad with silhouettes of the characters that looked just like the Justice League that ran as a house ad in Marvel in books. While I was finishing up my commitments at DC, John had decided to back out of the *Squadron Supreme*. He asked me, "Would you like to ink *Fantastic Four*?" And I said, "Sure, for six issues." I really didn't want a long-term inking commitment. I was just looking for something to recharge myself between projects. The first thing I inked in the *Fantastic Four* was a splash page with Dr. Doom's face on it that didn't get used for two or three issues. I think John just wanted both of us to get ahead and what better thing for me to ink than a splash page with Dr. Doom on it.

You've also inked a "Fantastic Four" story in an issue of What The—?!
Yeah, John and I did one story that they printed in the Fantastic Four trade paperback, *The Trial of Galactus*. At the very end it had Superb Man vs. the Fantastical Four.

What did you work on together after Adventures of Superman?
At some point I had switched over to Superman, and for issue #50, which was a double-sized issue, I had this idea for combining (before Amalgam) Mr. Mxyzptlk and the Impossible Man. I had three pages in this story that I carved out and I said, "I have to get John to draw them." It's a sequence that is reminiscent of the first meeting between the Fantastic Four and the Impossible Man. John said he would draw it as long as I inked it. We did those three pages in that book. He also inked some Curt Swan pencils in that book too.

The last thing we worked on was a commission for Jim Warden, who is John's art dealer. Jim had gotten the pencils to a wrap-around cover featuring Captain America, Bucky, and the Red Skull. That was the cover to *Captain America Collectors' Preview*. Joe Simon had originally inked the cover on a light box, so the pencils were still preserved. Jim had gotten this piece from John, and Jim asked me if I would ink it. That was about two years ago. It turned out pretty neat.

Like John you write, pencil and ink. As a creator, what do you think his strongest point is?
I think his strongest point is that he's got a really interesting way of distilling the 1960's Marvel Comics

that we all know and love into a contemporary form. I think he's one of the guys that can bring the characters to the present day without losing whatever essence the characters had. His *Superman* work was great but I think he has a special affinity for the Marvel stuff. It's like he's channeling Jack Kirby. Beyond that he's got a real neat design sense. It's hard to explain but that's the thing that always jumped out at me when John was hitting his stride back when he was doing the *Fantastic Four*. Maybe he started out a little slow, but suddenly things would show up in his work like background detail. Someone else would just draw a wooden chair, whereas John would draw a modernistic chrome and leather chair. He had a really good eye for capturing that kind of fashion. When you do comics you tend to repeat yourself, because you have to, you're under a deadline or whatever. I think John was really good at not taking the standard approach. He always added character to his backgrounds. The same is true of his machinery. His futuristic scenery is set apart from others that you see.

John has said that you are the best person to ink his pencils.
I think it was a good fit. Whenever I inked him I always thought that I was his Joe Sinnott or Wally Wood to Jack Kirby because I do think that we both have strengths that complement each other. I think that what he did was different enough from what I do that it made it very interesting for me to ink him. I think John helped me a lot. It's going to sound funny, but I think he helped me the most by leaving *Superman*. Suddenly that job opened up and I was there waiting. ❖

Captain America Collectors' Preview cover with Ordway inks.

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JIM WARDEN

How did you meet John?
I first met John about eight years ago. Mike Zeck, who is another artist I am friends with and whose work I sell, lives pretty close to John. One time when I was visiting Mike he made arrangements for us to drop by John's place.

How did you become his art dealer?
I guess the foundation for selling John's work was laid when Mike Zeck first introduced us. During the course of our visit, John showed us the room where he kept all of his artwork. There were literally thousands of pages lying in stacks on shelves and they were in little or no order. I mentioned to John that he needed someone to organize the artwork for him. He replied "I've been waiting years for someone stupid, I mean kind, enough to do just that." I quickly volunteered my services and he accepted.

A couple of weeks later, I made a trip to John's where I spent the weekend going through all of his artwork. I separated the pages by title and issue number and used large envelopes to store all of the pages for a given issue. It took all weekend to complete the inventory and my "fee" was to pick a piece of artwork from what John had. I decided on his first Wolverine cover, the image of which remains one of my favorite depictions of that character. The art is hanging in my office and is a constant reminder of my organizing John's artwork.

After I'd finished organizing the artwork, I asked John if I could try and sell some of it for him. He said, "sure," and handed me a portfolio to put some pages in. At the time, I primarily sold the artwork at conventions in the Washington, DC area (where I live) and sometimes at conventions in New York City.
After awhile, John decided to run a plug for me in an issue of *John Byrne's Next Men*. He included my phone number and address and I was literally flooded with calls and letters! He continued to run the plug in the letters pages of subsequent issues and it was responsible for generating a lot of business. The letters page really was a perfect medium to spread the word about obtaining John Byrne artwork and I received, and continue to receive, orders from folks all over the world who might otherwise never have known how to obtain a piece of John's artwork.

What artwork of his seems to be the most popular today?
His current work on *Spider-Man* has generated a lot of interest among many comic art fans. It really seems to be a terrific combination; John taking Marvel's flagship character back to his origins. The project really is a labor of love for John and I think the fans have responded very favorably.

What's the most common request that you get?
I'd say that fans asking for pages from John's run on *Uncanny X-Men* is the most common request I get. Unfortunately these pages are all sold and are in the hands of collectors.

If someone is interested in purchasing a piece of artwork by John, how can they contact you?

I just sell the artwork part-time and the best time to reach me is in the evenings between 8:00 pm and 11:00 pm eastern time. The phone number is 301-782-4052. Or they may e-mail me at doa1@erols.com. Finally, I have a web site at www.doa.netsus.com. Let me add that my sole role is to sell his artwork! I do get a lot of contacts from folks who ask questions like "Can you get John to do a convention/store appearance?" or, "How much will John charge to do a pinup for my book?" I'm just his art dealer, not his agent.

From Captain America Collectors' Preview cover with Simon inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

What is it about John's work that influenced you?
John rose to prominence during a time I had turned my back on comics and concentrated all my attention on illustration and painting. When I came back into the fold I was set in my ways, as far as artistic influences, though I appreciated John's work and his position at the top of the field. Sometimes I wish I'd studied him a little more in my formative years. Nevertheless, I visited John when the Legend imprint formed and we both lived in Connecticut. He impressed me in a couple of ways. First off, it was impossible not to be awed by the house, a true mansion, there on the Connecticut "gold coast", worthy of the 19th century shipping magnate it was probably built for. We climbed three flights past Neal Adams and Frank Bellamy and Bernie Wrightson originals to John's studio. He had a Wally Wood page

above his board for inspiration. And he showed me how he turned out his huge volume of top-drawer work.

Each morning he'd write two pages of captions and dialogue on the computer, and set it in a lettering font adapted from his own hand-lettering style; though for his own amusement he'd also created fonts based on the lettering of Dave Gibbons, Frank Miller and Dick Sprang. He'd print these out on a clear adhesive sheet. Then he cut and placed the type on the bristol board pages he'd draw that day, drawing panel borders and world balloons around it. Then he'd pencil, then he'd ink. Two complete bloody pages a day, and he wrote horror novels on the side!

The lesson I learned was that there were ways to work hard and ways to work smart, and John did both.

What do you feel is John's strongest point as an artist?
His total allegiance to the priority of storytelling (artistic decisions always hinge on imparting story information), and a generally high level of craft. His figure drawing, his drawing of environments and hardware (his feel for forms produced by modern industrial design especially), and particularly his use of perspective are superior. I remember being in on a discussion on perspective between John and Dave Gibbons, in connection with a 3-D computer program John was working with. The two best perspective men in the business (today I'd add David Chelsea)! It was quite a kick to be there.

John's inking is good because of his good draftsmanship, but I sense he's less interested in that part of the job. He's not a nut for light source, feathering and stroke shape. Fortunately, he attracts some of the best inkers in the business to collaborate with.

How about as a writer?
His writing's smart, inventive, hyperbolic. I associate Byrne the writer in my mind with James Cameron, though I don't think he has Cameron's sentimentality about male-female relations. Brainy, fast-moving genre fiction, sometimes a little bit mean. No question, John's work is fueled in some ways by the anger that's a deep part of his being. This is not a shortcoming; it provides much of the energy that's there. A sort of ferocious intelligence at work is pretty compelling in an entertainer.

There are two virtues to John's writing I particularly appreciate. One is what might be called his hard-SF self, the one which tries to rationally work out all the ramifications of a fantastic premise. Woe to the letter-writer who challenge's John's rationale for some decision; it has an elaborately worked-out basis, no question!

Concrete from Next Men #24 *Concrete TM & © 1999 Paul Chadwick*
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Paul Chadwick

The other is his patience with the serial-fiction form. There were set-ups in *The Next Men* that didn't pay off for over a year. When you made the connection, you felt like a real insider. And there were details like the super-fast character, Danny, who slowly gained bulk in the legs that carried him at breakneck speed, issue by issue — though it was never commented upon. Let the reader "get" something that's only slyly revealed — and they'll feel smart and love you. Understatement definitely has its place.

Of the projects John has done what is your favorite?
For purely sentimental reasons, *The Next Men* since I was kind of in on it at the time; heck, Concrete got a cameo! (The *Next Men* #24) I loved the sheer scope of it, though (alas) it has been left incomplete so far. His work on the *Hulk*, the *Fantastic Four* and *The Man of Steel* are also highlights. And there was no better choice to carry on *Kirby's Fourth World* series than John. I suspect his new Spider-Man series will be a Byrne milestone. The novel *Whipping Boy* packed a punch, too. ❖

TIM TOWNSEND

What is it about John's work that influenced you?
Not only would I consider John *an* influence, I'd consider him *the* influence . . . at least the primary one. At age 5, I picked up my very first comic book. An old Charlton Comics issue of *E-Man* with a Byrne Rog 2000 back up story, WITHERING HEIGHTS to be exact. At that moment I was hooked on comics and, better yet, drawing them. It literally started that moment for me. From then on, my comic collection paralleled John's career. I must have traced every book he worked on, page for page, for the next 5 years.

What do you feel is John's strongest point as an artist?
Hmm . . . that's a tough one. It's hard to nail down one facet of any aspect of his art. He's one of the most versatile guys in the history of the biz'. I'd have to say that John's storytelling is his strongest point. He helped to write the book on modern-day story telling. John could draw an entire issue using stick figures but he'd make the storytelling so interesting that you wouldn't even notice. Then there's his dynamics. There are but a handful of guys that have approached Jack Kirby's sense of dynamics. None have rivaled it but some have broached it. Walt Simonson is another that comes to mind.

What are your thoughts about his relative strengths as an inker versus as a penciller?
As an inker, I'm a bit overly critical of others inks. I know that John can ink his ass off, he's shown us that over the years. I'm not a particular fan of his inks over the last few years but I think that's more a matter of taste than it is a measure of ability. I know what John's going for in his current inks and I can respect it. It's very high energy to say the least.

How about as a writer?
As a writer, John is another all-time-fave' of mine. I think he's every bit as able a writer as he is a graphic artist. Actually, I think each discipline lends strength to the other. I think John could give leading physicists a few lessons on time travel. Very few comic writers out there make me think the way John does. He has an awesome knack for remembering and utilizing obscure incidents from storylines that happened over 20 years ago. He finds that little detail that everyone looked past, point it out, and turn it into a major revelation. I think he's just the guy to breathe some life into what has become an overly "trendy" industry. There's too much on the table already. Instead of fabricating more and more "cookie cutter" storylines, perhaps we should go back and delve into what's already happened. How does the old cliche' go? Take a few steps back in order to move forward? John's the perfect guy for the job.

Of the projects John has done, what is your favorite?
I wish I could be clever and come up with a more obscure, less obvious answer but, my favorite is the DARK PHOENIX SAGA. I don't think many realize just how much John had to do with the storyline as well as the art. More current stuff that I enjoyed tremendously was the *New Gods* and *Jack Kirby's Fourth World* run. Simply great work! Jack would be proud.

Have you ever worked with John on a project?
Uhg . . . unfortunately, no. That would be the career pinnacle for me. Just to get to ink him once would be as good as it gets for me. He's going to be doing some work on the X-office soon so, with a little luck, perhaps I'll get an opportunity. If you're reading this John, "who loves ya' babe?!"

ANDY SMITH

What are your thoughts on John as a creator?
I think he's a genius at what he does; he's a great storyteller. He's one of the best in comics because he loves it so much. And it shows.

People criticize his artwork now from what it used to be. People say they wish his style was more like it was on the *X-Men*. But I just got an original page from *Wonder Woman* and I don't think that the printed book does it justice. The original to me is just mind blowing. I like the looseness of his style. I'm a huge Joe Kubert fan, and that's how Joe does it. He does not draw every little detail, he indicates. I think that's what Byrne's going for and I think he's pulled it off really well.

John's artwork is evolving. John's more wrapped up with telling a story with pictures than just drawing pretty pictures. There are so many artists out there that are so wrapped up with drawing the pin-up shots and pretty pictures but they're not telling a story. It's just one nice looking shot after another, but they don't connect in any way. John sticks to the old rule in comics that you shouldn't have to read the word balloons to follow the story. It's visual. You should be able to go from panel to panel and be able to tell what's going on. With John's work you look at it and you know immediately what is what.

Who do you think is the best inker for John Byrne?
I think he is. But if I had to pick someone else I think Klaus [Janson] would do a great job. Klaus can ink anybody. What would be interesting to see is to have Joe Kubert ink John Byrne. Joe Kubert would probably put his own faces on it, but the bodies would be John's. It's hard to change the way somebody constructs a body. A face, everybody has a trademark face and of course a trademark way they draw a body too.

Have you ever collaborated with John?
When John was starting *Spider-Man*, Marvel wanted to get an inker on the book so they had a lot of people trying out. I tried out by inking a sample page over him, which was great. But I didn't get it. The competition was pretty fierce.

BILL NICHOLS

Why do you consider John Byrne an influence work?
Off-hand, I can think of no other artist who, over these many years, I have followed and kept current with whatever project he or she may be involved with than John Byrne. Why would that be? Maybe because he's always doing *something*, whether it's *Wonder Woman*, or *Spider-Man*, or *Next Men*, *Superman*, *Namor*, *She-Hulk*, *Fantastic Four* . . . the list goes on and on. He's prolific and, for me, never stale. I guess at this point you could consider me one of those people that's going to follow him from project to project just to see what he's going to do. That's pretty much a given for me.

My point? That, even with all of today's "hot" artists, I still spend my consumer dollar on the John Byrne book. Not because it's a habit or because I've been brainwashed by subliminal messages or because it's been genetically encoded in my DNA to follow his work . . . It's because I actually ENJOY it . . . And that's been the thing for me for so many years, seeing his work on so many characters on so many books and seeing his work inked by him or a host of other inkers. I've gotten a healthy dose of what different inkers can *do* when working over the pencils of the same artist. As an inker now and as a budding inker seeing that and trying to *understand* the process was invaluable. You not only get a sense of the development of his own style, but the effect of the inked line on his style. I've looked at how Terry Austin inked him on the *X-Men*, at how Joe Sinnott, Jerry Ordway and he himself inked his *Fantastic Four*, as well as Bob Wiacek, Dan Green, Pablo Marcos and Kyle Baker on other things. And hopefully, I've learned a few things along the way.

What do you think is his strongest point as a creator?
He brings something new to whatever project he's doing. A different take on a character or on that character's world that impacts that character even when John's moved on to his next project. As I said before, I always want to see what's cooking in the John Byrne "kitchen."

What do you consider to be his best work?
He did some good work on *Superman*, but for me, it was the run he did on the *Fantastic Four*, starting with #232, where he inked himself under the pseudonym "Bjorn Heyn." He did some awesome stuff in there, like the Galactus story and the "Trial of Reed Richards."

TERRY AUSTIN

What was the first project that you and John worked on together?
Archie Goodwin put us together with Chris Claremont on *Star-Lord*, which appeared in *Marvel Premiere*. That was the first time that I inked John, and actually met him when I was starting the job. That was how we ended up getting the *X-Men*, actually. Archie decided that John and I made a good team. As I recall, Archie said they were looking for someone to take over *X-Men* because it was starting to get a little bit popular. Marvel had decided that it was never going to get any kind of following if it remained bimonthly, and Dave Cockrum could only do it on a bimonthly basis. So therefore he [Archie] made the decision to bring us on it and bump it up to a monthly to see if that might generate a little more interest in the book.

Before you worked with John, were you familiar with his work?
I was a big fan of John's. I had seen his stuff starting out when he was at Charlton. I didn't see *Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch* but I saw *Doomsday + 1*, *Space 1999*, and all the others that he did back then. In fact when I was working at Continuity Associates, Chris Patterson was inking some of John's pencils — I think it might have been for Charlton. At one point Chris was working with me in the office [at Continuity] and I used to sit there and look at those pencilled pages and think, "Oh man, if I could only get my hands on this stuff!" So I certainly knew John's work and was a big fan of his before we ever worked on a project together.

What do you think is his strongest point as an artist?
Gosh, I don't know that he has a strongest point. Almost everything that he does is done very well, whether it's composition, or the actual anatomical drawing. The guy's just good. He was born with talent and he got better.

Excluding yourself, who do you think is the best inker for John?
I'd say John. And I'd have to say that John is a better inker for him than I am. Generally as a rule, most pencillers that can ink, ink themselves better than somebody else. That's because they're privy to more information than a total stranger is. So if John inks it himself it looks better than if someone else does.

When we worked as a team, John wasn't very confident as an inker. I was supposed to go with John onto the *Fantastic Four;* in fact I had started inking the covers. Something happened up at Marvel where I was waiting a month for the pages and then when I got them it was so late that they wanted me to rush through it and I just said , "No, that's not how things are supposed to work. You don't let stuff sit in a drawer for a month and then send them to me and then tell me I have a couple of days to turn the stuff in." So it was at that point that John decided to grit his teeth and ink the *Fantastic Four* himself. Although I continued to ink the covers for while after that.

He has gotten really good at inking. He uses a lot of different tools that I can't use. Every time I go over to his house and see the stuff in black and white it just knocks my socks off. His work just looks great. Although . . . there's just something that doesn't translate onto the printed page these days. I don't know if it's the computer coloring or what but the stuff looks a little flatter than it does when I've seen the original art.

When you were working on the X-Men, how much did the two of you interact?
I knew John at that point. I think we spoke on the phone every few months or so. As I recall I went up to a couple of conventions in Canada while we were

Alpha Flight #1 cover; Austin inks. *TM & © 1999 Marvel Characters, Inc. All Rights Reserved.*

working on the *X-Men* and spent a couple of days with John. But as far as working, we didn't really have a lot of contact. We just didn't talk much. I remember I used to get a lot of calls from Chris Claremont; he would call me up and tell me what he was going to write in the next couple of dozen issues. So I knew the direction that the book was going in. Every once in a while John would come down and spend about a week hanging out around Marvel and they used to call me up and say, "Why don't you come in? We're going to talk about what's going to happen in the book for the next year or two." I would never do it. I always felt like Chris and John had very strong opinions on the characters and in the direction that the book should go. I felt that a third opinion coming in really wouldn't help much. So as much as I liked seeing both of those guys I tended to stay out of that process.

Now that you're not working on anything together, you have more contact with each other.
Yes. But these days it's more of what's the latest gossip . . .

When you did Amazon, did it feel strange working together again?
Well I don't know if strange is the right word. It was a little different for me because John's been inking his own stuff for so long now. He hadn't really pencilled anything for anybody else to ink. And he freely admits that he had a really hard time, because he had to keep reminding himself to add things, since he wasn't inking it himself. I did have some problems. I found it more difficult, and I wasn't really happy with the solutions that I came up with to try to compensate for some of the uncertainty. But I did enjoy doing it.

There are certain pencillers that I feel are like touchstones for me. Every few years I think it's a good thing to go back and ink John or Marshall Rogers or Mike Golden or Rick Leonardi. I just feel like everybody's work changes over the years and it's always interesting to see how it develops.

Every once in a while John will talk to me about doing something with him. At one point he wanted me to ink *New Gods*, and more recently he offered me *Spider-Man*. But as I tell John, people seem interested in us as a team but if we were doing it regularly they'd just get bored. It would be nothing special, whereas if we do a job every couple of years then it's something that people kind of get excited over. ❖

Forgotten Treasures

Can you tell us the story behind the work you did for Mind Spawn Communications (Ox, Raven, Oracle, Destiny, and, Beyond the 7th Voyage)? These are comic page-size (10x15) black and white prints; at the bottom it says, "set #12 of a limited edition of 100 sets/
Yikes! I had almost completely forgotten about that stuff! Duffy Vohland, the would-be inker who worked at Marvel and tried to get me work there in the early Seventies had a notion of a "Sinbad 2000" book. He asked me if I could work up some stuff along those lines, and I did. Most of it was swiped from stuff I'd seen Esteban Maroto doing in some European books I came across at the time.

The Raven, Oracle, and Ox; Vohland inks.

So there *is* a first time for everything

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MIKE'S MEANDERINGS

by Mike Pascale

"All right, mister — *What's going on here!?!*"
"Wha—? *Who?!*"
"The Name is CAPTAIN AMERICA!"

That exchange is courtesy of *Iron Fist* #12, April, 1977. The reason I mention it is not because of the dialogue (snappy though it is), but because of the full-page artwork that accompanied it. That of Cap, backlit, ready to kick butt, opening a door on a startled Iron Fist. The artist? No, not Rob Liefeld . . . John Byrne, of course!

Cap hadn't looked that cool in a non-Kirby book since Gene Colan pencilled him years earlier.

Though I was already familiar with his stylistic art (he was becoming a fan-favorite *then!*), it's that one panel that has stuck in my feeble mind when I think of Byrne. I remember getting goosebumps the size of walnuts when I first saw that baby. And the fact that I can still recall it after 21 years is a testament to Byrne and his power as an artist/storyteller. (It's also a sad commentary on my pathetically empty life, but this is John's gig, so never mind.)

We've all seen stuff written about JB, praising him as the comic-book Messiah or panning him as the four-color Antichrist. But that's just folks' opinions, and as we all know, opinions are like vacuum cleaners — everyone has one and they all suck.

What's important is that people *are* talking about him . . . after being part of mainstream comics for well over two decades! In an industry where the customer base turns over every ten minutes, that's one admirable achievement. Just one of many for Mr. Byrne.

I'll be honest — I don't dig the "ret-con" thing, throwing out decades of comic-book history and pretending that it never happened. (Hey, John! If the events in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 never happened, how about giving me *your* copy? I mean, it doesn't exist, right? John? Hello? Rats. Well, I tried!)

But you gotta admit: taking 36 or 48 years of continuity (as with Spidey and Superman, respectively) from *dozens* of writers and distilling it into *one* cohesive beginning that stays true to the basic concept of the character while adding something new and interesting for old and new readers *and* providing enough potential for *future* writers, ain't exactly easy. It takes talent. And John Byrne has plenty of that.

And influence? Let's see . . . ever hear of Mike Zeck, Jim Lee, Erik Larsen and a guy named Todd McFarlane? Look at their old (and even some new) stuff . . . you can describe the style in two words: John. Byrne.

I tell you, the guy's influence permeates this industry like the smell of freshly-microwaved popcorn. So why shouldn't some people resent him? (Don't they get jealous when you have the popcorn and they don't?)

What I like most about him is that he never forgets who put him where he is: the fans. And no matter how he feels about some professionals, John always treats his fans with respect and courtesy.

I've seen him sign entire runs of his *X-Men* and more for one lucky kid . . . and when a friend of mine met him at a convention and lamented he couldn't find a certain "hot" print John had done months earlier, Mr. Byrne said, "hold on," walked out to his car, brought back a print and sold it to my friend for the original price!

That's cool. And that makes John Byrne one of the good ones, in my book.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna go re-read that *Iron Fist*.

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WHO ARE THEY?

Terry Austin Inker of a variety of books throughout his career. His current work includes inking *Green Lantern* and *The Superman Adventures.*

Paul Chadwick His first published work appeared in *Dazzler* for Marvel Comics. He created Concrete which is published by Dark Horse Comics.

Nick Cuti Former editor at Charlton Comics. He co-created E-Man with Joe Staton.

Fred Hembeck Cartoonist whose work has appeared in the *Comics Buyer's Guide, Marvel Age* and *the Comic Reader.*

Tony Isabella "America's most beloved comic-book writer and columnist." He is a regular columnist in the Comic Buyer's Guide and he has his own daily online column. He is the creator of Black Lightning.

Dan Jurgens Among the many books he has written and pencilled, he wrote and pencilled *Superman #75, The Death of Superman.* He also created the Tangent Universe.

Bill Nichols Currently inking *Magus* for Caliber.

Larry Niven Award winning author whose credits include *Ringworld, Dream Park* (with Steven Barnes) and *Lucifer's Hammer* (with Jerry Pournelle).

Jerry Ordway Inked *Crisis on Infinite Earths* for DC and was one of the writers on the *Death of Superman* storyline. He is currently writing and pencilling *The Power of Shazam.*

Mike Pascale Creator of *Bru-Hed* and *Nasti: Monster Hunter.* Both are published by Schism Comics.

John Romita, Sr. His career in comics began in 1949. In the 1960's he returned to Marvel where he soon started pencilling the *Amazing Spider-Man.*

Andy Smith Just completed working on *X-Men Unlimited* with Andrew Hennesy and Todd Dezago. He is currently writing a "how to" book on comics.

Roger Stern Prolific writer who wrote the *Death and Life of Superman* novel.

Tim Townsend Currently the inker on the *Uncanny X-Men.*

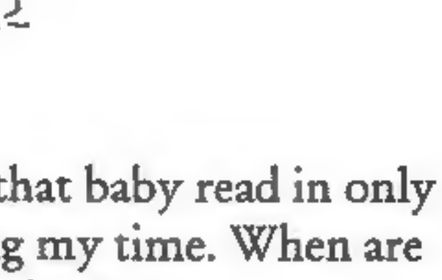
Jim Warden Art dealer whose clients include John Byrne, Paul Chadwick, Alan Davis, Tim Truman, and Mike Zeck.

LETTERS

Dear Comic Book PROFILES,
Just wanted to let you now I've bought the last two issues of your fine publication (Neal Adams & John Romita). I like the concept behind the book and especially the fact you devote the whole issue to one comic legend. Speaking of legends...I would love to see you guys focus on the work of my all time favorite comic book artist..the great John Buscema. Other artists I would be interested in seeing in future issues would be Gene Colan and John Romita, Jr. A lot of comic related books out there, like *Wizard*, focus most of their attention on the young hot shots, or the latest artistic flavors of the month. I respect & applaud the fact, that you guys actually talk to the real legends in comics, artists whose work was not only brilliant throughout their career....but has also withstood the test of time, like Neal Adams & John Romita. I hope you'll consider that John Buscema idea.

THANKS,
Owen O'leary

Thank you Owen for your kind words. We are hard at work trying to line up an issue on John Buscema; only time will tell. As for your other suggestion...



Take care
Paul Hayward

Paul thank you for your comments. The magazine is continuing to evolve thanks, in part, to suggestions such as yours. This issue's cover, while still basically sporting the same format, has been modified slightly to address some of the comments that you, and others, have made.

To: Comic Book PROFILES
I sure did enjoy the issue. I had that baby read in only a couple of hours, and I was taking my time. When are you going to do one on Gene Colon?

Dennis Barger

P.S. Still trying to get my local shop to carry this EXCELLENT magazine.

Dennis, and anyone else, be sure to tell your retailer that the magazine can be ordered through both Diamond and FM. In fact the solicitation for our next issue will be out in December. And who is the topic of our next issue? Well, none other than Gene Colan!

I want to take a moment to correct an error from last issue. The correct web address for Comic Book Electronic Magazine is http://members.aol.com/ComicBkNet. Or you can also check http://www.digitalwebbing.com/cbem. Speaking of web pages, by the next issue we should have news to tell you about our very own web page!!

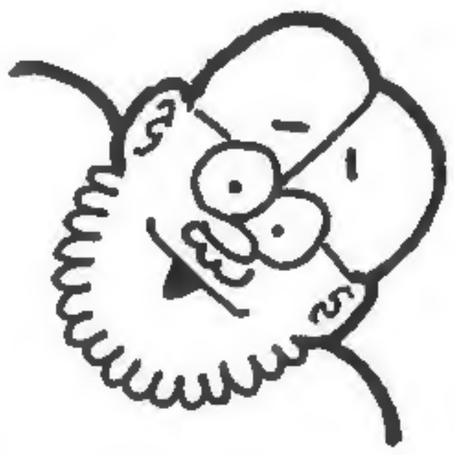
Well, I've run out of room. Take care, and I hope to meet you back here in 90!

Remember our address is:
As You Like It Publications, P.O. Box 2055, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 and the e-mail address is CBPROFILES@aol.com.

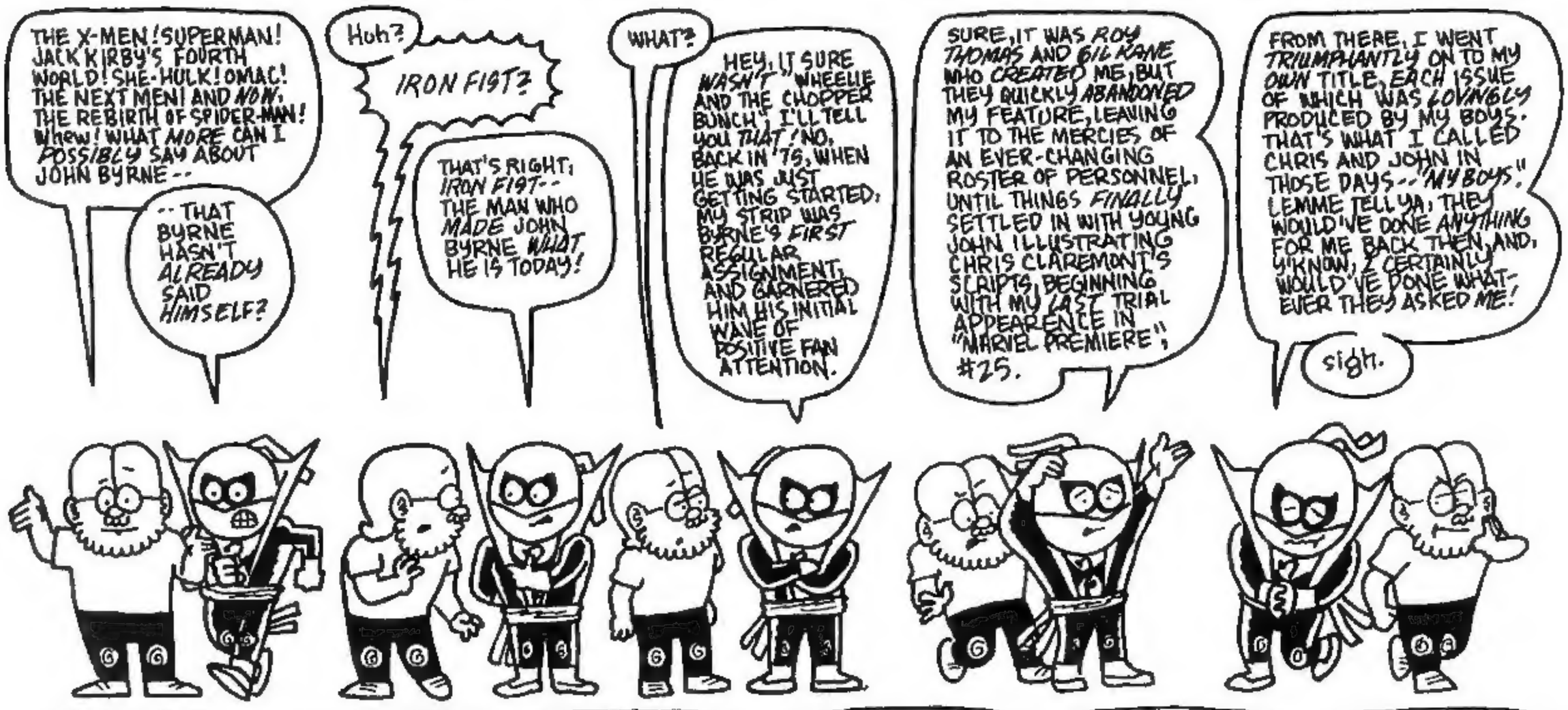
Dear Tina,
This was my first issue but it won't be the last! I picked it up because it seemed to promise a lot of entertaining reading for the price. I'm not a huge John Romita fan but I've probably seen the majority of his Marvel stuff & I almost always find interviews interesting. Well, it certainly was value for money & interesting. I don't know about your previous fonts/ formats but this was perfect; crystal clear, easy to follow, easy to read and logically organized. I especially liked the unpublished art tidbits & the little anecdotes. It was also nice to see Jim Shooter's piece- I know that he's not Mr. Popular but I've also had the utmost respect for him as a creator/ writer/ editor. Compare Marvel now & then (or is it just the effect of nostalgia or being of the age to appreciate superheroes?) Anyway, future creators I'd love to see: Dave Sim, Frank Miller, David Lapham & an issue with a couple of lesser known creators like Carla Speed McNeil & Terry Moore, people who may not be commercial enough to carry an issue to themselves but could well be interesting. The cover layout isn't the most attractive in the world. I'd have preferred the price to be larger (I wouldn't have bought it at $4.50 for example) & the logo itself could have been smaller with more prominence given to John Romita's name.

GENE COLAN

In our next issue, Gene Colan talks to us about his life and his career; from his early influences, including Milton Caniff and Coulton Waugh, to his first meetings with Jack Kirby and Stan Lee, to his eventual return to Marvel in the 1960's and his work on such books as *Iron Man* and *Daredevil*. Gene also discusses how he goes about creating a page. As always there will be many supporting interviews from friends, colleagues, and people that he has influenced. All this in a bigger Comic Book Profiles as we bring you *more* original artwork then ever before. And as always, Mike Pascale will continue his Meanderings and Fred Hembeck will be on hand to give us his Final Thoughts.



HEMBECK'S FINAL THOUGHTS


THE X-MEN! SUPERMAN! JACK KIRBY'S FOURTH WORLD! SHE-HULK! OMAC! THE NEXT MEN! AND NOW, THE REBIRTH OF SPIDER-MAN! Whew! WHAT MORE CAN I POSSIBLY SAY ABOUT JOHN BYRNE--
-- THAT BYRNE HASN'T ALREADY SAID HIMSELF?
Huh?
IRON FIST?
THAT'S RIGHT; IRON FIST-- THE MAN WHO MADE JOHN BYRNE WHAT HE IS TODAY!
WHAT?
HEY, IT SURE WASN'T "WHEELIE AND THE CHOPPER BUNCH" I'LL TELL YOU THAT! NO, BACK IN '75, WHEN HE WAS JUST GETTING STARTED, MY STRIP WAS BYRNE'S FIRST REGULAR ASSIGNMENT, AND GARNERED HIM HIS INITIAL WAVE OF POSITIVE FAN ATTENTION.
SURE, IT WAS ROY THOMAS AND GIL KANE WHO CREATED ME, BUT THEY QUICKLY ABANDONED MY FEATURE, LEAVING IT TO THE MERCIES OF AN EVER-CHANGING ROSTER OF PERSONNEL, UNTIL THINGS FINALLY SETTLED IN WITH YOUNG JOHN ILLUSTRATING CHRIS CLAREMONT'S SCRIPTS, BEGINNING WITH MY LAST TRIAL APPEARENCE IN "MARVEL PREMIERE", #25.
FROM THERE, I WENT TRIUMPHANTLY ON TO MY OWN TITLE, EACH ISSUE OF WHICH WAS LOVINGLY PRODUCED BY MY BOYS. THAT'S WHAT I CALLED CHRIS AND JOHN IN THOSE DAYS-- MY BOYS! LEMME TELL YA, THEY WOULD'VE DONE ANYTHING FOR ME BACK THEN, AND, Y'KNOW, I CERTAINLY WOULD'VE DONE WHATEVER THEY ASKED ME!
sigh.
WHEN THE... UNFORTUNATE NEWS CAME DOWN THAT MY BOOK WAS TO BE CANCELLED AFTER 15 ISSUES, DID MY BOYS BAIL ON ME? I ASK YOU, DID THEY RUSH OUT LOOKING FOR NEW ASSIGNMENTS? DID THEY QUICKLY DRAFT A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW "NIGHT NURSE" SERIES? DID THEY? Huh? DID THEY?
uh, NO?
NO, THEY DID NOT. FIRST, THEY CANNILY UTILIZED THE PAGES OF SPIDER-MAN'S HOME AWAY FROM HOME, "MARVEL TEAM-UP" TO TIE-UP DANGLING PLOT THREADS FROM MY NOW DEFUNCT PUBLICATION (ISSUES 63 AND 64), BUT WHEREAS EVEN THE MOST CONSIDERATE OF CREATORS MIGHT'VE LEFT IT AT THAT, THAT WASN'T ENOUGH FOR MY BOYS, BECAUSE DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY DID THEN? Huh? DO YOU?
um, YEAH, I THINK I DO...
OF COURSE YOU DO, BECAUSE THEY PULLED OFF ONE OF THE MOST AUDACIOUS STUNTS IN THE HISTORY OF COMICS! THEY TOOK A STREETWISE BLACK BRAWLER, AND TEAMED HIM WITH THE KUNG FU WHITE BOY WHO FOUGHT IN YELLOW SLIPPERS, AND BY GOLLY, THEY MADE IT WORK! WHO WOULD'VE BELIEVED IT? I'M NOT AFRAID TO TELL YOU EVEN I HAD MY DOUBTS!?.
Y'SEE, CHRIS AND JOHN TOOK TWO MONTHS TO CAREFULLY SET UP THIS UNLIKELY SITUATION. THOSE WERE NUMBERS 48 AND 49, BUT WITH THE 50th ISSUE, LUKE CAGE'S BOOK WAS PROUDLY RECHRISTENED "POWER MAN AND IRON FIST." (TODAY, IT SURELY WOULD'VE BEEN A NUMBER ONE, BUT BACK THEN, THERE WAS STILL A RESPECT FOR THE ACCUMULATION OF NUMBERS). AH, IT WAS A HEADY MOMENT, BUT SADLY, IT WASN'T TO LAST.
THAT WAS BYRNE'S LAST ISSUE. AND CLAREMONT LEFT SOON AFTER. THEY HAD JUST BEGUN TO WORK TOGETHER ON "THE X-MEN"... HISTORIANS SHOULD NOTE THAT THE FINAL ISSUE OF MY SERIES FEATURED THEIR FIRST MUTUAL TAKE ON THOSE MUTANT MISFITS --AND SOON, MY BOYS WERE NO LONGER HEARING ABOUT THE GREAT JOB THEY'D DONE ON MY STRIP. NOW ALL THEY HEARD WAS "X-MEN, X-MEN, X-MEN!!!"... GEEZ, MAYBE TERRY AUSTIN WAS THE MISSING PIECE?..
SOON AFTER, BYRNE STARTED WRITING HIS OWN STORIES, AND THAT WAS IT. WRITING AND REVAMPING-- QUICKLY, THAT BECAME HIS GAME.
I'M SHOCKED AT HOW BITTER YOU SOUND, DANNY RAND! AFTER ALL, YOUR ALLIANCE WITH LUKE CAGE DIDN'T GO ALL THAT BADLY, BESIDES THE CHARMING CHEMISTRY THAT RESULTED BETWEEN YOU TWO, THAT PUBLICATION PRODUCED ANOTHER 75 ISSUES WITH YOUR NAME STAYING THE MASTHEAD!!?.
AND DO YOU REMEMBER JUST EXACTLY HOW THE LONGRUNNING "POWER MAN/IRON FIST" SERIES WAS BROUGHT TO A CONCLUSION? WITH MY CONCLUSION! I WAS KILLED!
Ah, YES, BUT NEED I REMIND YOU WHO, YEARS LATER, RESURRECTED YOU?
...
..WELL, YEAH, I KNOW, BUT STILL--
uh uh uh!!
WHO WAS IT, DANNY? WHO WAS IT THAT BROUGHT IRON FIST-- YOU-- BACK TO LIFE? C'MON, SAY IT!
..JOHN BYRNE..
THAT'S RIGHT-- JOHN BYRNE! SURE, IT MAY'VE OCCURRED WITHIN THE PAGES OF "NAMOR" BUT-- AND I MEAN YOU NO OFFENSE BY THIS, DANNY-- I'VE NO RECOLLECTION OF FANS AT THE TIME CLAMORING FOR AN IRON FIST REVIVAL NOVE. ZIPPO. FRANKLY, FRIEND, INSTEAD OF ALL THIS MEAN-SPIRITED WHINING, I THINK YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL TO "YOUR" BOY, BYRNE.
R-REALLY?
YUP.
NOW, SHOULDN'T YOU BE GETTING BACK TO THAT NICE HEROES FOR HIRE GROUP YOU'RE IN THESE DAYS-- A MEMBERSHIP, I MIGHT ADD, THAT YOU'D PROBABLY NEVER'VE HAD A SHOT AT HAD JOHN NOT CHOSEN TO TO PIG YOU UP OUT OF THE GROUND, SO TO SPEAK?..
OKAY.
WE MUSTN'T BOTHER MR. BYRNE WITH YOUR TRIVIAL CONCERNS, DANNY. AFTER ALL, NOW THAT AL MILGROM, PETER DAVID, AND JOE CASEY HAVE FINISHED THEIR FILL-IN ISSUES, JOHN HAS TO GET BACK TO HIS WORK ON "THE INCREDIBLE HULK"!
..MAYBE I JUST NEED TO WAIT A LITTLE LONGER!..

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COMIC BOOK

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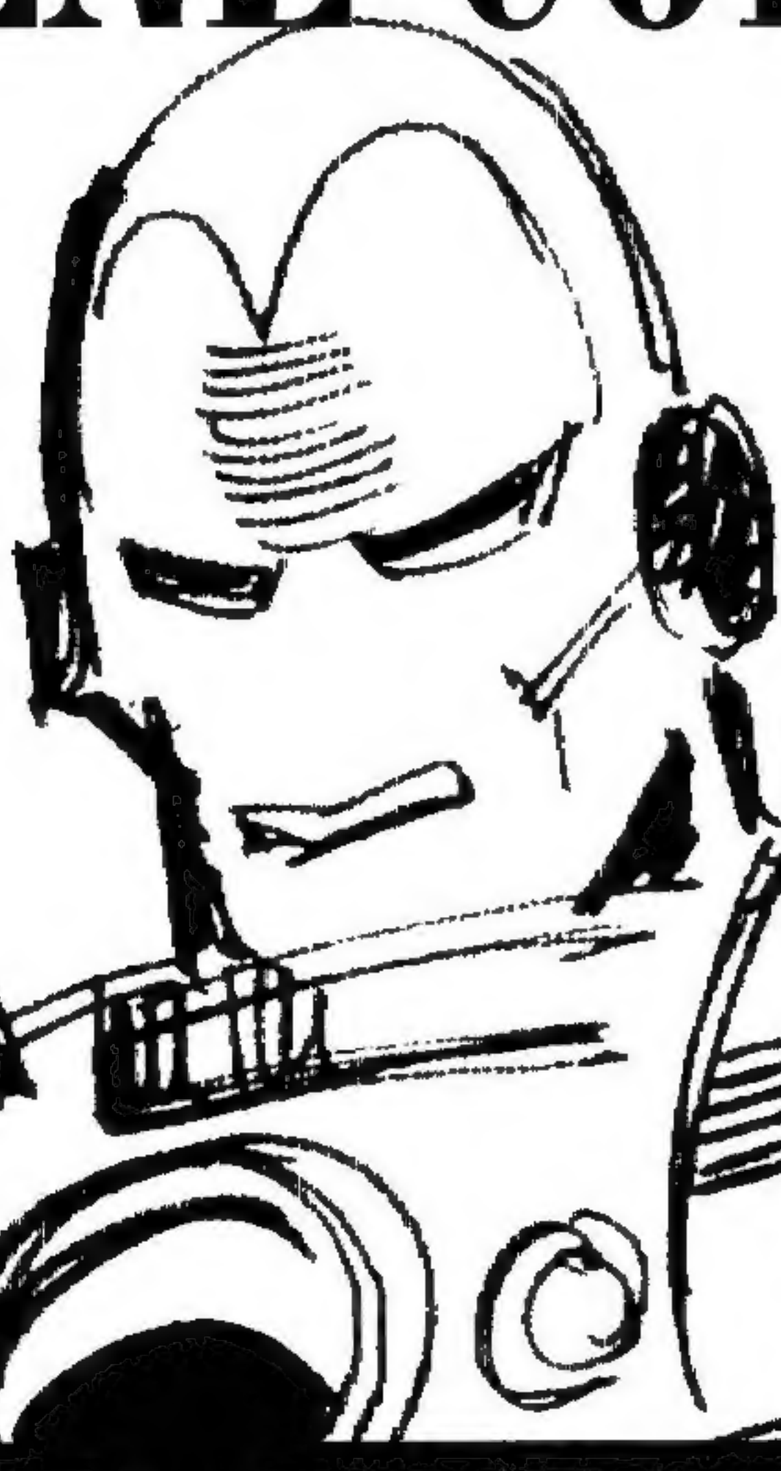
GENE COLAN



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